

**OPENING REMARKS BY DR. HANS TROEDSSON  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR-GENERAL FOR GENERAL MANAGEMENT OF THE  
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
AT THE 54th DIRECTING COUNCIL OF PAHO, 67th SESSION OF THE WHO  
REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE AMERICAS**

**28 September 2015  
Washington, D.C.**

Mr President  
Honourable Ministers  
Distinguished Delegates  
Dr. Etienne  
Ladies and Gentlemen

As the world transitions to a new agenda for sustainable development, we can thank this Region for making the case that noncommunicable diseases put a brake on development. Likewise, the Rio+20 Conference on sustainable development did much to shape the new agenda.

Fifteen years ago, human misery was thought to have a discrete set of principal causes, like poverty, hunger, poor water and sanitation, several infectious diseases, and lack of essential care during childhood, pregnancy, and childbirth.

The results of that focus, and all the energy, resources, and innovations it unleashed, exceeded the wildest dreams of many. It demonstrated the power of international solidarity and brought out the best in human nature.

We can all celebrate the momentum created and the solid achievements made. Progress towards the goals set for reducing maternal and child mortality took the longest to materialize, and for a good reason. Achieving these goals depends, not on the scaled-up distribution of commodities, but on having a well-functioning health system in place.

Countries with a strong tradition of primary health care were in the best position to make progress on all the health-related goals. Dr. Margaret Chan thanks your Director and the Region's ministers of health for their passionate commitment to primary health care and the value system it articulates.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Much has changed since the start of this century. The factors that now govern the well-being of the human condition, and the planet that sustains it, are no longer so discrete. The new agenda, with its 17 goals and 169 targets, will try to shape a very different world.

This is a world that is seeing not the best in human nature, but some of its worst: international terrorism, senseless mass shootings, bombings in markets and places of worship, ancient and

priceless archaeological sites reduced to rubble, and the seemingly endless armed conflicts that have contributed to the worst refugee crisis since the end of the Second World War.

Since the start of this century, newer threats to health have gained prominence. Like the other problems that cloud humanity's prospects for a sustainable future, these newer threats to health are much bigger and more complex than the problems that dominated the health agenda 15 years ago.

Noncommunicable diseases have overtaken infectious diseases as the world's biggest killers. The climate is changing, with consequences to health ranging from outbreaks of epidemic-prone diseases to excess deaths from air pollution, heatwaves, and other extreme weather events.

Antimicrobials are failing at an unprecedented rate. Tuberculosis is on your agenda. Even with the best care, only around half of all patients with multidrug-resistant TB can be cured.

The prices of new medicines are increasingly unaffordable for even the richest countries in the world.

As in the past, we can look to this Region for leadership in overcoming these and many other difficult challenges. In doing so, Member States can draw on two of the Region's unique assets: a strong sense of solidarity throughout the Americas and a great spirit of optimism.

The Ebola outbreak in West Africa is not yet over, but we are very close. The response is in a phase where we can track the last chains of transmission, and break them. To get to this phase, WHO deployed more than 1000 staff to 68 field sites in the three countries.

Dr. Chan thanks countries in the Americas, especially the United States, Canada, and Cuba, for contributing to the international response that has brought us so far.

Thank you.