

Statement by H.E. Patrick Pengel, Minister of Health, Suriname on Behalf of the Region of the Americas

Farewell to Dr. Margaret Chan, Director General, WHO

May 23, 2017, Geneva

Madame. President,

Please allow me to bid farewell and present the expression of appreciation on behalf of the Region of the Americas and myself to the outgoing Director General of WHO- Dr. Margaret Chan,

Director General,

As you have shown us in your ten-year tenure at the helm of this valuable organization and your recent reflections, it is very true that the health challenges we are facing today are “unprecedented in their complexity and universal in their impact”. And hence recognizing this reality you have been a tower of strength and beacon of global health stewardship. You have guided the Secretariat how and why to focus on more vulnerable and marginalized people in society, championed the cause for women and girls and highly advocated for the principles of universal health coverage.

Your health leadership priorities resonate in our region. Our governments along with committed stakeholders have embraced the priorities of overcoming ‘health inequities’ and addressing the ‘social determinants of health’. Thanks to your leadership, we have chartered the way and expanded primary health care in many settings. We are committed to reducing the burden of noncommunicable diseases and focused on new and emerging challenges such as antimicrobial resistance and climate change and health.

We recognize the organization mandates, the legal basis, and your tenure as Director General WHO that continued to support member states’ equal participation and delivering on norms, standards and global health policies. We salute you for strengthening global alliances for public health to better address global, regional and country challenges.

Your thoughtful words are very encouraging; please allow me to quote the Director General's comments from her ten year reflection report ...“In a world facing considerable uncertainty, international health development is a unifying – and uplifting – force for the good of humanity.” We deeply appreciate your honesty, fortitude and foresight expressing the unique role of the Organization in global health leadership. The last ten years of your leadership have been very instrumental to reform the organization towards new perspective of efficiency and effectiveness. We do hope the seed of change that is nurtured in this period creates the foundation for a better and vibrant WHO of the 21 Century.

Dr. Chan,

Let me thank you again for your service on behalf of all whole Region of the Americas and myself for your commitment, dedication and unwavering leadership of WHO for the last ten years.

Indeed the world has transformed in many ways, thank you for your global contribution and for the lives saved; for services improved via effective interventions; and maintaining the progress to a healthier, fairer, and safer world. Your legacy would forever remain deep inside our hearts. Thank you for being a great global health leader. With much respect and admiration.