



30th PAN AMERICAN SANITARY CONFERENCE
74th SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE OF WHO FOR THE AMERICAS

Washington, D.C., USA, 26-30 September 2022

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**OPENING REMARKS BY THE OUTGOING PRESIDENT OF THE PAN AMERICAN SANITARY
CONFERENCE OF PAHO, HON. DR. JULIO BORBA,
MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE OF PARAGUAY**

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**30th Pan American Sanitary Conference
74th Session of the Regional Committee of WHO for the Americas**

His Excellency Charles Angelo Savarin, President of the Commonwealth of Dominica,
Her Excellency Dr. Carissa Etienne, Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau,
His Excellency Mr. Xavier Becerra, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services of
the United States of America,
His Excellency Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health
Organization,
On behalf of His Excellency Mr. Luis Almagro Lemes, Secretary General of the Organization of
American States, Ms. Maricarmen Plata, Secretary for Access to Rights and Equity of the
Organization of American States,
Ms. Mary Lou Valdez, Deputy Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau,
Distinguished Ministers of Health,
Distinguished delegates and members of the diplomatic corps,
Representatives of invited bodies,
Ladies and gentlemen:

I wish you all a very good morning.

It is with great pleasure I give you the warmest welcome to the 30th Pan American Sanitary Conference and 74th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Americas. This is the first face-to-face meeting in this area, due to the pandemic, and it is a happy coincidence that it is being held in this important plenary session of the Governing Bodies.

Without any doubt, the current phase of the pandemic with the consequent appearance of SARS-COV-2 variants, the monkeypox outbreak, and other converging diseases continue to keep our countries and the international community in a state of constant alert and concern.

This is a propitious occasion to reflect on the lessons from this difficult period. Clearly, we can affirm that this is a pandemic of inequalities, especially in the health, economic, and social spheres, where inequities have been exacerbated both between and within countries. Indeed, in countries like mine, we had to redouble our efforts to minimize the impacts of the crisis, with a sharp increase in levels of indebtedness, necessary to protect the health of the population.

That is why, on the occasion of the 120th anniversary of PAHO, which has played a fundamental role in the field of public health, we in the Region of the Americas must adopt the necessary measures to face this new scenario and renew the political commitment that allows us to build a more consolidated multilateral system that prioritizes, above all, the strengthening of

international cooperation, solidarity, equity, and unity among the Member States of this Organization as the fundamental bases of Pan-Americanism.

We need to understand that health emergencies and disasters do not respect borders, and that to achieve a resilient recovery we must work together and in coordination in order to combat regional and global threats.

In this regard, the issues we will be addressing during this Conference are of the utmost importance for our Region, including the election of the future Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (and Regional Director of WHO for the Americas), who will have as arduous a task as the esteemed Dr. Carissa Etienne has had and continues to have.

Her dynamic leadership and strategic guidance have been essential to reaching countless milestones over the past ten years, in addition to meeting the unprecedented challenge of this pandemic. I would like to mention a few of these milestones:

The Region of the Americas was the first WHO region to eliminate endemic transmission of measles, rubella, and congenital rubella syndrome.

PAHO successfully led activities for preparedness and response in the Region to epidemics caused by the dengue, Zika, and chikungunya viruses, as well as outbreaks of cholera and yellow fever.

PAHO's technical assistance has been vital, including the delivery of equipment and supplies for the COVID-19 response, as well as support in key areas such as routine immunization, prevention of noncommunicable diseases, and expansion of access to health care.

I could go on listing many more, but all of us here know and have witnessed the work she has done. For all of this, dear Dr. Carissa, please be assured of our most sincere recognition and appreciation of what has been achieved during your tenure.

However, we are aware that there is still a long way to go and that in this new period that is beginning, the Director-Elect will have to lead PAHO toward regional governance that fosters the creation of policies, strategies, and plans that:

Promote international collaboration to achieve effective strengthening of the national systems that provide care for mental health, which is considered an integral part of our general health and well-being, as well as a human right.

Enable a Border Health approach through the consolidation of health surveillance and information, and of health services and networks, between border cities that link countries.

Foment the promotion, dissemination, and care of chronic kidney disease (CKD) throughout the Region, through early and timely detection, prevention, and specific treatments.

Create viable mechanisms for the treatment of rare diseases, through access to quality information and the promotion of research and development, and

Face the challenges that may arise in ensuring that Member States have fair and equitable access to vaccines, technologies, and medical products.

Finally, I would like to thank the Organization for entrusting Paraguay with the presidency of the 29th Pan American Sanitary Conference.

Thank you very much.
