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**PANEL ON PRIMARY HEALTH CARE: ADDRESSING HEALTH
DETERMINANTS AND STRENGTHENING HEALTH SYSTEMS**

**Information document: WHO Global and Regional Meetings and Initiatives
in Support of the Renewal of Primary Health Care**

Introduction

1. This information document has been prepared to complement PAHO's 48th Directing Council *Panel on Primary Health Care: Addressing Health Determinants and Strengthening Health Systems*" (Item 4.10 of the 48th Directing Council.) It focuses on meetings and initiatives that are currently taking place worldwide, in support of the renewal of Primary Health Care. The document also provides a brief summary of PAHO's efforts in advancing the mandate obtained from the Member States in 2005 (Resolution xxx) of implementing health systems based on primary health care.

Global Meetings and Initiatives in Support of the Renewal of PHC

2. Building the capacity of health systems is one of the six priority areas of work of the World Health Organization, as outlined by its Director General Dr. Margaret Chan.¹ From the beginning of her term, Dr. Chan committed herself to strengthening health systems based on the values and principles of PHC, as evidenced during her remarks at the inauguration in November 2006²:

¹ WHO. Dr. Margaret Chan takes office as Director-General of the World Health Organization: impact on health of women and people in Africa to be measure of success:
<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2007/pr01/en/index.html> , (accessed July 24, 2008)

² WHO. Speech to the World Health Assembly: <http://www.who.int/dg/speeches/2006/wha/en/index.html>
(accessed July 24, 2008)

“When we talk about capacity, we absolutely must talk about the importance of primary health care. It is the cornerstone of building the capacity of health systems. It is also central to health development and to community health security. I plan to promote integrated primary health care as a strategy for strengthening health systems. The reason is simple: It works. This is the only way to ensure fair, affordable, and sustainable access to essential care across a population. We have the evidence. I have experienced this personally.”

3. This commitment has been shared by all Regional Directors, and highlighted in a joint statement that appeared in the July 5, 2008 issue of *The Lancet*³:

“Dr Chan’s commitment to primary health care is in itself an expression of the unequivocal support from the six Regional Directors and of the unanimity of views among the senior management of the Organization with regard to primary health care. Despite the wide variation across and within regions with respect to health challenges and the responses required to address these, there is mutual agreement that primary health care will continue to be central to WHO’s strategy to strengthen health systems towards the vision of “Health for All”.

4. WHO has provided guidance to a series of comprehensive regional meetings that have stressed the relevance of PHC in addressing the health challenges of the 21st century. The first such meeting was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina in August of 2007. It was followed by a meeting Beijing, China (November 2007,) Bangkok, Thailand (January 2008,) Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (April of 2008,) Tallinn, Estonia (June 2008,) and Jakarta, Indonesia (August 2008). In October 15-16, the 30th Anniversary of the Alma Ata Declaration will be celebrated in Almaty, Kazakhstan. At that time the WHO is scheduled to launch the 2008 *World Health Report* which is devoted to PHC. An international Conference on PHC in Doha, Qatar, in November 2008, will culminate the regional meetings (refer to enclosed Table 1.) The WHO has established a Global Task Force on PHC, which is working in close coordination with Regional Task Forces on PHC in each WHO Region, and is holding discussions with partners and stakeholders on strengthening the linkages between health systems and the Global Health Initiatives.

5. To support the global renewal process beginning at the 2009 Executive Board of the WHO, discussions on PHC renewal are being held at all 2008 Regional Committee Meetings. This effort will culminate at the World Health Assembly.

³ The Lancet.com. Unequivocal regional support for Margaret Chan’s commitment to primary health care: <http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140673608608909/fulltext?iseop=true> (accessed July 24, 2008)

PAHO/WHO's Efforts to Renew PHC in the Americas

6. At the 25th Anniversary of Alma-Ata and following a request of PAHO Member States at the 44th Directing Council in 2003, the Region of the Americas took stock of the rich experience and lessons learned at country level of PHC implementation. Resolution CD44.R6, passed during that session of the DC, called for Member States to adopt a series of recommendations to strengthen PHC, and to organize a process for defining future strategic and programmatic orientations in PHC.⁴

7. PAHO enabled a comprehensive process that fostered dialogue with relevant stakeholders, civil society and non-governmental organizations, universities, professional associations, government, UN sister agencies and the international community. A Working Group provided critical support in drafting a position paper⁵ on PHC renewal, and a regional consultation held in Montevideo, Uruguay in 2005, produced a Regional Declaration on PHC - "Regional Declaration on the New Orientations for Primary Health Care", or Declaration of Montevideo - which was later approved during the 46^o Directing Council of September 2005.⁶

8. The Declaration has brought about a renewed sense of commitment and purpose by countries in the Region to incorporating the core values, principles and elements of PHC into the development of their national health systems. PAHO's position paper on PHC and the Declaration have become important references on how to strengthen health systems based on the PHC approach within the Region and beyond. By mid August 2008, over 20,000 copies of PAHO's position paper have been distributed worldwide. A full issue of the October 2006, *Pan American Journal of Public Health* was dedicated to PHC.

9. The renewal of PHC is fully incorporated in WHO's Mid-term Strategic Plan for 2008-2013⁷. Current technical cooperation includes the initiative to establish policy options for integrated delivery networks that support PHC-based health systems. A Regional Consultation is scheduled in Brazil this coming November. A methodology for the accreditation of PHC services networks has been developed and tested in three countries. The tool will be widely available in 2009. A course for developing

⁴ PAHO/WHO. Primary health care in the Americas: lessons learned over 25 years and future challenges. Resolution CD44.R6 of the 44th Directing Council, 55th Session of the Regional Committee for the Americas. 2003: <http://www.paho.org/english/gov/cd/cd44-r6-e.pdf> , (accessed July 24, 2008)

⁵ PAHO/WHO. Renewing Primary Health Care in the Americas: a position paper of the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO). Washington, D.C.: PAHO, 2007.

⁶ PAHO/WHO. Regional declaration on the new orientations for primary health care (Declaration of Montevideo). Declaration of the 46th Directing Council, 57th Session of the Regional Committee for the Americas. 2005: <http://www.paho.org/english/gov/cd/CD46-decl-e.pdf> (accessed July 24, 2008)

⁷ OPAS/OMS. Proposed Strategic Plan 2008-2012. Official Document No. 328, 2007: <http://www.paho.org/english/gov/csp/csp27-od328-e.htm>. (accessed July 24, 2008).

competencies of leaders on PHC through the virtual platform of PAHO's Public Health Virtual Campus is ongoing, with 80 participants from 20 countries. The same platform is being used to develop a course on competencies for PHC teams. Moreover, the IX International Meeting of Observatories for Human Resources being held in Chile in December will be devoted to addressing critical issues of PHC and Human Resources. Great strides are also being made in the quality agenda, with a strong approach on PHC teams, and increased participation of civil society in decisions on quality of care, in part through the initiative of Patient for Patient Safety.

Table 1: Summary of WHO global and regional meetings on PHC held or planned during the years 2007 - 2008

WHO Region	Name of Conference/ conference Webpage	Place & date	Purpose/objective(s)	Number of countries/ people attending	Declaration/Charter
AMRO	From Alma-Ata to the Millennium Declaration: International Conference on Health for Development: Rights, Facts and Realities. http://www.buenosaires30-15.gov.ar	Buenos Aires, Argentina Aug. 13-17, 2007	(a) Focus on health and development; (b) Discuss issues related to health systems strengthening in the current global context, human resources for health in the new millennium, and equity in health and financing; (c) Learn from the experiences of 20 countries on national PHC policies focused on health and gender policy, environmental health policy, human resources policy on health, health policy for the epidemiological transition, and drug policy; and (d) Reach consensus on a joint final declaration that contributes to the PHC strengthening and renewal process.	60 countries 1200 people	Yes. “Buenos Aires 30-15: Towards a Health Strategy for Equity, based on Primary Health Care”. The Declaration highlights the importance of health in promoting human development and securing internationally agreed development goals; the orientation of public policies and societies towards human development; and underscoring that PHC values and principles of the Alma Ata Declaration remain relevant in addressing the health problems of today’s world. (See Annex I)
WPRO	International Conference on the Development of Rural PHC in China. No webpage.	Beijing, China Nov. 1-2, 2007	(a) Share the national experience and challenges in implementing PHC in rural areas; (b) Exchange and draw upon useful international practices; and (c) Discuss ways of ensuring equitable access to basic health care for large rural populations.	9 countries 300 people	The Conference did not produce a Declaration/Charter.

SEARO	Prince Mahidol Award Conference: Thirty Years of PHC: Reviewing the Past and Defining the Future. http://www.pmaconference.org/home.asp	Bangkok, Thailand Jan. 31-Feb. 1, 2008	(a) Focus on current context of PHC, especially for lower income countries; (b) Synthesize country experiences, especially in context of globalization, achievements and emerging problems faced by PHC; and (c) Recommend policies and practical actions by developing countries and development partners on achieving PHC and HFA.	39 countries 300 people	The Conference did not produce a Declaration/Charter.
AFRO	International Conference on Primary Health Care and Health System in Africa: Towards the Achievement of the Health Millennium Goals. http://www.afro.who.int/phc_hs_2008	Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso Apr. 28-30, 2008	(a) Examine lessons learned from the past 30 years of PHC implementation in the African region; (b) Identify strategic orientations for scaling up essential interventions to achieve health related MDGs using the PHC approach for strengthening health systems; (c) Renew commitment of all countries in the region in moving forward PHC to strengthen health systems; and (d) Promote regional partnerships to strengthen health systems and PHC implementation.	46 countries 500 people	Yes. “Ouagadougou Declaration on PHC and Health Systems in Africa: Achieving Better Health for Africa in the New Millennium”. The Declaration reaffirms the principles of the Alma Ata Declaration of 1978; the responsibility that governments have for the health of their people; and that PHC has the potential to accelerate the achievement of the MDGs. (See Annex II)
EURO	WHO European Ministerial Conference on Health Systems: Health Systems, Health and Wealth. http://www.euro.who.int/healthsystems2008	Tallinn, Estonia Jun. 25-27, 2008	(a) Lead to a better understanding of the impact of health systems on people’s health and on economic growth in the WHO European Region; and (b) Take stock of recent evidence on effective strategies to improve the performance of health systems, given the increasing pressures on them to ensure sustainability and solidarity.	53 countries 500 people	Yes. “The Tallinn Charter: Health systems for health and wealth”. The Charter reaffirms and adopts the values embodied in earlier charters, conventions and declarations, including the Alma Ata Declaration among others; that investing in health is investing in

					human development, social well-being and wealth; and that well-functioning health systems are essential to improving health. (See Annex III)
SEARO	Revitalizing Primary Health Care. http://www.searo.who.int/EN/Section1243/Section2538.htm	Jakarta, Indonesia Aug. 6-8, 2008	(a) Take forward the PHC agenda in the SEARO Region in the current context; and (b) Provide recommendations on revitalizing PHC for consideration at 61 st session of the Regional Committee for South-East Asia.	11 countries 300 people	The Conference did not produce a Declaration/Charter.
GLOBAL	International Conference Dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the Alma-Ata Declaration of WHO/ UNICEF on Primary Health Care: Primary Health Care – Community Health and Prosperity. http://www.almatyconference2008.kz	Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan Oct. 15-16, 2008	(a) Celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Alma Ata Declaration; (b) Take stock of global experiences of implementation; and (c) Discuss the application of the values and principles of HFA/PHC to the challenges of today's globalised world.	400-500 people	Yes. Almaty Conference Resolution on PHC. (Not available yet)
EMRO	International Conference on PHC: The Foundation for Health and Well-Being. http://www.phcconference.org.qa	Doha, Qatar Nov. 1-4, 2008	(a) Share regional and global experiences on different aspects of PHC based on evidence and provide an opportunity for mutual learning on the subject; (b) Propose action oriented recommendations based on the evidence and experiences presented on PHC during the Conference addressed to move forward the PHC agenda; (c) Provide opportunity for policy makers, administrators, public health scientists, civil society representatives and development partners to establish formal and informal networks to promote PHC; and (d) pronounce the Qatar Declaration on PHC, that reflects the endorsement of all participating countries for the Eastern Mediterranean Region.	700 people	Yes. The Qatar Declaration on PHC (Not available yet)
