

AMRO: REGIONAL STATEMENT FOR WHA68

## GENERAL DEBATE: BUILDING RESILIENCE IN HEALTH SYSTEMS

18 MAY 2015

Honorable President, Honorable Ministers, Doctor Margaret Chan Director General, ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honor to address you on behalf of the Region of the Americas.

0. Firstly, let me congratulate you, Honorable Minister, for your election as President. We trust that under your guidance, this will be a successful Assembly.
1. The on-going outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease, that has especially affected the Western Africa Region, is another unfortunate reminder of the vulnerability of our health systems. The influenza pandemic in 2009 and the Haiti earthquake in 2010 had already revealed this challenge to the Americas. Today we all face the urgent need for robust and resilient health systems, capable of responding effectively to health emergencies, while ensuring universal and equitable access to quality health services in a sustainable way.
2. This is the fundamental objective behind the construction of resilient health systems, as highlighted by the Strategy for Universal Access to Health and Universal Health Coverage, approved by the Region in 2014.
3. Furthermore, the Americas have committed resources to this endeavour and engaged with many different partners at all levels. This has resulted in an improved implementation of the International Health Regulations, in the increase of health facilities that comply with international safety standards and in greater awareness of the need to adapt and prepare for all threats and hazards. As established in the Strategic Plan 2013-2018 for a more resilient health sector in the Americas, what we aim for is *“a health sector with adequate, nationally-led and sustained capacity to ensure that member states are resilient enough to protect the physical, mental and social wellbeing of their communities and rapidly recover from disasters”*.

4. It is with this mind-set that the Region promptly assessed its preparedness and response capacity at an early stage of the Ebola public health emergency. Although we evidenced baseline capacity in place, we also identified some critical weaknesses and inequalities which require effective and urgent improvement. Therefore, in the Americas, we understand that resilience should not be only a concern raised in the occurrence of an emergency, but a long-term priority for health authorities at the national, regional and global level.
5. WHO is called to play a major role in assisting countries and regions to strengthen their health systems toward resilience. This goes hand-in-hand with the need to guarantee that the Organization is equipped with the necessary mechanisms. That is why the Americas support the on-going process of WHO Governance Reform, from coherence at all operational levels to the way its governing bodies conduct their decision making.

Mr President,

6. 2015 is an important year for health that brings us the occasion to assess what we have accomplished. We commemorate the 20 years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for action and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. This year also gives us the chance to build upon our lessons and experiences of the Millennium Development Goals to achieve the unfinished agenda, particularly with respect to women and children's health and HIV/AIDS, and to ensure that health is a core element of the post 2015 development agenda through a comprehensive multisectorial approach.
7. The Region of the Americas recognizes that climate change and air pollution are global challenges and a widespread public health problem that needs coordinated action, including strengthening WHO's capacity to address these. Likewise, we strongly believe in the need to scale-up policies that address malnutrition in all of its forms and the interlinkages between food security, nutrition and health. The Region of the Americas, therefore, stands ready to implement the commitments of the Second International Conference on Nutrition.

Mr President, allow me to refer now to the Colombian context...

[...]

Mr President,

We expect this Assembly to mark a breaking point for us to build more resilient and robust health systems at all levels.

Thank you very much.