



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



**49th DIRECTING COUNCIL**  
**61st SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE**

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**WELCOMING REMARKS BY THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL  
OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES  
AMBASSADOR ALBERT R. RAMDIN**

# ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES



**ADDRESS BY**

**AMBASSADOR ALBERT R. RAMDIN**  
**ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL**

**AT**

**OPENING MEETING OF THE**  
**49TH DIRECTING COUNCIL**  
**61<sup>ST</sup> Session of the Regional Committee**

**Headquarters Pan American Health Organization**  
**September 28th, 2009**  
**Washington D.C.**

Dr. Jose Gomes Temporao, Minister of Health of Brazil and Outgoing President,  
Distinguished Ministers of Health of the Americas,  
Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization,  
Dr. Mirta Roses, Director of the Pan American Health Organization,  
Distinguished Permanent Representatives to the OAS,  
Dr. Hector Salazar Sanches, Representative of the Inter-American Development Bank,  
Distinguished Representatives from International and Regional Organizations,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Recognizing the importance of this meeting, especially in the context of the challenges we all face at this moment, as we have heard from previous speakers, it is indeed a great pleasure and a distinct honor for me to join you here today in representation of the Organization of American States to address the 49th Directing Council.

The OAS has the highest regard for our sister organization PAHO. Our close working relationship, which extends far beyond our common allegiance to the inter-American system, has allowed us to cooperate on critical issues of concern and interest to the Americas. Indeed, in recent years our agendas have intertwined with great intensity thanks to the recognition that health, like other social development priorities have to be linked to the region's political agenda.

Through a multi-sectoral approach, the OAS has been working with PAHO on matters of occupational health and safety, health education and nutrition, and assistance to persons with disabilities, as well as organizing joint meetings on HIV/Aids and Avian Flu. We were also pleased to include the launching of the Health Agenda of the Americas in the OAS General Assembly in Panama City in 2007.

I commend Dr Mirta Roses and her very able staff for the leadership in assisting the people of this Hemisphere not only in creating better health care and services, but also for the humanitarian efforts and the short term relief when natural disasters hit our countries. I salute Dr Roses also for her unwavering support to strengthen the

collaboration between the inter-American institutions; you are indeed a trusted and valuable partner in this process, as you clearly demonstrated recently as a member of the First Inter-American Mission to the Republic of Haiti as well as through the many reports you submitted to us on the situation in Honduras.

On the situation in Honduras, as raised earlier by the distinguished Minister of Health of Brazil, I can inform you that the OAS also would like to see a peaceful and speedy solution in the current impasse leading towards a normalization of the democratic order in that country. In a short while the Permanent Council of the OAS will meet in a Special Session to discuss the latest developments.

We believe that to structurally foster peace, stability and prosperity in our societies, two sectors are of critical importance: education and health. Without an educated and healthy population we cannot translate our rich natural resources in productive assets, we will not be able to attract investments and become competitive, we will not be able to deliver efficient and timely services, increase productivity and generate an environment as much as possible free of instability and conflict.

Although significant progress has been made in the health sector in the Latin America and Caribbean region, countries continue to face pressing challenges: high levels of poverty, income inequality, social exclusion and discrimination, environmental degradation, just to name a few. Real and sustained development cannot take place where poverty and inequality persists.

There is no doubt in my mind that development challenges including health, if not addressed in a timely and effective manner, can undermine democratic governability, political stability, and deteriorate the security environment.

Therefore, we have taken note of PAHO's recommendation to member states that the health and well-being of the citizens of Americas require not only a strong

political commitment but also the integration of development and health policies. We fully share and support these views.

We need to include the social agenda in the political agenda of the hemisphere in a meaningful way, because the people of the Americas want to see the results of a democratic framework and not only in macro economic terms, but in a concrete and measurable way for them, they want to see their disposal income grow, see their children go to school, progress in life in a safe environment, in general they are looking for a significant improvement in their quality of life.

For this we need to foster a new developments paradigm, in which education and health should be critical elements. I am speaking of a development paradigm that more than before focuses on the human potential, one which is more inclusive and equal and takes into account the vulnerabilities of especially the smaller economies in our Hemisphere.

To facilitate these objectives we need to enhance the cooperation between inter-American institutions in Headquarters as well as on the ground between our offices in the member states.

I am encouraged that our governments have recognized, at the national and hemispheric levels, the need to coordinate and integrate social, labor, and economic policies. But greater efforts are needed in order to achieve a more holistic, comprehensive, and a result-oriented approach to development in the Americas with a clear focus on providing opportunity, equality and equity to all.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that the Organization of American States sees health as cross-border in nature, and as such, we believe no country can effectively address all of the challenges associated with this sector alone. The development needs of Latin America and the Caribbean region are immense. To meet them, we need

vigorous democracies; we need clear national policies and collective responses to the most pressing needs of our peoples.

In the end, ladies and gentlemen, whatever we undertake at the national, hemispheric or international level, it is about the three **“P’s”**:

- **PEOPLE,**
- **PEACE AND**
- **PROSPERITY.**

It is about policy making and implementation and, maybe, less about politics. I thank you very much for your attention and wish you a most productive 49<sup>th</sup> session of the Directing Council.

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