

## **Statement: Welcome to new WHO Director General from the Americas**

On behalf of the Americas I am grateful for the opportunity to welcome and congratulate WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanon Ghebreyesus.

It is an honor for me, in my capacity as representative of Ecuador, a country that during the past 10 years has experienced significant changes in health as a right, to express the warmest congratulations of the Americas for your deserved election.

As a region we emphasize the importance of having a strong WHO that is capable of fulfilling its constitutional function as a directive authority and coordinator of international health work.

To accomplish this, please count on our commitment to work together for a more dynamic, flexible, resourceful and well-managed organization with the capacity to respond in a timely manner to the challenges we face in public health. We wish for this reform process of the World Health Organization to allow us to bring a renewed spirit to the institution, for fulfilling its mandate and meeting needs of the 21st century.

As a region we have high expectations, and we are confident that your orientation will be timely, clear and proactive, in order to facilitate the decision-making processes on governance and its implementation by Member States and the Secretariat.

After a long day, we the delegates to this Assembly renew our commitment. And from the Americas, we reiterate our call that you take into account the following points:

1. You should strengthen the leadership and coordination role of WHO as a health agency of the United Nations system, in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, and for facilitating integration and work on determinants of health in a coordinated manner. This requires strong communication, coordination, and working mechanisms among United Nations agencies, subregional blocs, and other organizations and partnerships to facilitate multisectoral action. We must avoid duplication of action and consistently address global health challenges, including timely care and response to emergencies.
2. We ask you to ensure that WHO protects and promotes the full and effective enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health as one of the fundamental rights of every human being, irrespective of race, religion, political belief, economic or social status. We also seek gender equity at all levels, in the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals and for advancing a vision focused on healthy life and well-being. We look to you to catalyze changes in the health response -- to transcend the traditional disease-oriented approach, according to national priorities and their circumstances.

It is also imperative to reiterate our commitment and work on access to medicines.

3. Recognizing that the WHO reform process is incomplete, it is necessary to pursue reform in accordance with the principles of transparency, efficiency, effectiveness and accountability, equity and resilience, including middle-income countries. The evaluations of the first phase of the reform will serve as a guide to examine the next stages of this process, at the three levels of the Organization.
4. Encourage the exchange of best practices and lessons learned between regions and headquarters, to give visibility to work at three levels, and to identify practices and lessons that can be replicated
5. Ensure the highest levels of efficiency, competence, integrity and merit for all WHO staff, including the appointment of the senior management team of the Organization, while ensuring geographical representation and gender equity.
6. Promote transparency and accountability in the planning and design of the Organization's programs, as well as in the process of resource allocation of assessed and voluntary contributions, taking into account the specific characteristics, needs and interests of all regions as far as possible.
7. Ensure full implementation of the Framework for Exchange with Non-State Actors on the basis of transparency, openness, inclusiveness, accountability, integrity and mutual respect, in a coherent manner at all three levels of the Organization, and with a view to achieving full operationalization within two years.

Mr. Director, count on the region of the Americas, which has historically contributed to the adoption of innovative and effective policies for the benefit of the population, especially the most destitute. May the beginning of your work mark an era of cooperation between WHO and health authorities, with the goal of achieving health systems that are strengthened in their capacity and with adequate responses.