



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

28th PAN AMERICAN SANITARY CONFERENCE

64th SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

Washington, D.C., USA, 17-21 September 2012

CSP28/DIV/3
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

**WELCOMING REMARKS BY THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

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I am delighted to be here with you today to welcome you to the Pan American Sanitary Conference—and to extend greetings on behalf of the United States Government and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Secretary—Kathleen Sebelius.

We particularly wish to welcome Dr. Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General; Dr. Luis Castillo, Chile's Under Secretary of Assistance Networks of the Ministry of Health; and Mr. José Miguel Insulza, Secretary-General of the Organization of American States. It is such an honor to be here with you. The Pan American Health Organization, the world's oldest international health agency, has been a true leader in the effort to improve the health and well-being of all who live in the Americas.

As most of you in this room already know, this will be Dr. Mirta Roses' last Pan American Sanitary Conference.

When Dr. Roses' term as Director ends on January 31, 2013, she will have led this organization for 10 terrific years.

During her tenure, Dr. Roses has promoted immunization programs as a backbone of health promotion activities. Her actions led to a Global Vaccines Week; elimination of rubella from the Americas; and the addition of new vaccines in the vaccination schedule. She has moved this organization forward, by creating new programs on gender equity and gender violence. She has also enhanced ethical oversight, by becoming the first WHO Regional Office to establish an Ombudsman office. And she has helped lead the way within WHO's Regional Office to increase transparency, including through the establishment of a new internal auditor.

Dr. Roses, on behalf of Secretary Sebelius, we thank you for your incredible dedication to public health and for your outstanding service to this organization.

With the appointment of a new Regional Director, it is our hope that PAHO will continue to press on reforms to increase transparency and accountability—so that multilateral institutions that provide assistance in the 21st century—will rise to new

standards of making public—more detailed information on their activities and expenditures.

Models such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria have set new standards for transparency—and we applaud that.

The United States also wishes to thank PAHO for its efforts to help all countries in our Region meet their obligations under the International Health Regulations.

I recognize that we still have a lot of work to do; however, I am confident that we will all meet our individual and collective IHR obligations by June 2014, under the leadership and support of PAHO.

It's clear that additional efforts are required to build the core capacities necessary to protect—not only our Region—but the global community—from threats to public health.

We look forward to discussing with our regional partners ideas for advancing preparedness and capacity-building efforts throughout the Americas.

Last year at this Conference, Secretary Sebelius talked about PAHO's leadership in helping to shape the international conversation about non-communicable diseases.

Under Dr. Roses' guidance, PAHO has led the way in seeking to address this rapidly growing global health threat.

But we still have a long way to go in our efforts to reduce the incidence of chronic disease in all of our countries. For example, here in the United States, more than a quarter of all Americans—and two out of three older Americans—have multiple chronic conditions.

That is why this year's World Health Day theme, "Good health adds life to years," is a timely reminder of the need to ensure that people around the world live well, as they live longer.

And that's really what public health is all about, isn't it?

So, in closing, let me thank you again for participating in this governing body meeting.

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I look forward to our continued partnership in our efforts to help all of our citizens reach their highest attainable levels of health.

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