



**Pan American
Health
Organization**



**World Health
Organization**
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE
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**REMARKS BY DR. STELLA BOLAÑOS VARELA
UPON RECEIVING THE PAHO AWARD FOR HEALTH SERVICES MANAGEMENT AND
LEADERSHIP (2017)**

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**25 September 2017
Washington, D.C.**

**29th Pan American Sanitary Conference of PAHO
69th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Americas**

Honorable President of the 29th Pan American Sanitary Conference
Honorable Ministers of Health
Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Honorable Director-General of the World Health Organization
Honorable Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau
Esteemed colleagues
Ladies and gentlemen:

Instead of thinking about getting older and taking a step back from creating and doing, I decided I should find a way to contribute to change. I decided to do this through my actions, my knowledge, and the wisdom I have gained over the years, aware that the future of health is everyone's responsibility, particularly for those of us who believe that only by coming together and building on each other's contributions can we make every dream come true.

It is a question of using our empowering passion to move forward in step with impressive biomedical and technological advances that can and, indeed, should turn health facilities into instruments for improving people's quality of life.

These facilities serve thousands of people and we must recognize that they reflect a mission: They are places that should respond to people's needs with an approach that is scientific, technical, technological, therapeutic, and rehabilitative. But above all, this approach should be profoundly human and spiritual, ensuring sensitivity in the face of pain and suffering, with experts who do not split people up into parts or dimensions and who are aware of the value of life and the need to fight for comprehensive well-being free from exclusion and inequality, from conception until old age.

They are places that eliminate the waste of resources, refocusing teaching and training with a clear understanding that the goal is to give meaning to life and to the true power of serving others.

Places where diverse leaders accompany people, implementing positive and effective leadership based on teamwork: teams that are genuinely concerned for others and seek authenticity, cross-cutting relations, and transparency in their field of action.

Places where process-based care services are not only established in writing, but are actually guaranteed: services that emphasize continuous care and interdisciplinary networks, incorporating innovative methods that break paradigms and make the most of available human, material, and technological strengths.

Places with a portfolio of services that respond to the needs of people and their families so as to coherently resolve these needs in a way that is satisfactory for patients and authentic for the professionals and technical personnel involved, making them places of inspiration and daily motivation.

This is possible. Through the actions of professionals in my country, with many people's active and critical participation, we have learned that we can come together in order to help humanize the structures in which we work.

We respond to change with unconventional alternative methods, requiring us to play a leading role alongside families, users, and communities. We must be convinced, as Pope Francis says, that:

"Rivers do not drink their own water; trees do not eat their own fruits, the sun does not shine for itself; flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves. Living for others is a rule of nature... Life is good when you are happy, but life is much better when others are happy because of you."

I am therefore grateful for this honor on behalf of myself and all of the professionals who believe it is possible to permanently change our path so that our daily duties in health facilities may truly merit the trust of those who put their health, and often their lives, in our hands. Thank you very much!!
