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HEALTH IN THE AMERICAS – HEALTH STRATEGIES FOR THE XXI CENTURY
Meeting with President and Cabinet
(Panama City, Panama - 13 June 1996)

Greetings — thanks for receiving me — indication of the importance the President gives to health and the health sector.

Divide the presentation into three parts:

- **The challenges for Health in the Americas and Panama.**
- **The responses and roles of the health sector.**
- **Seek the advice and counsel of the President about some of the issues raised.**

Health in the Americas

- **The state of health is improving in general.**
Indicators - Infant mortality - Life expectancy
The average IMR is 47
The average Life expectancy in Latin America is 67.9
(in Latin America and the Caribbean is 68.0)
- **This region — eliminated polio — measles, tetanus.**
- **What are the major current problems?**
Two causes — demographic and epidemiologic changes leading
for example to chronic diseases and infectious diseases coexisting.
inequity — groups marginalized.

* **Pan American Health Organization, Pan American Sanitary Bureau, Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization.**

Health in Panama

Better than the average for the Americas.

IMR — 17/1000

Life Expectancy — 73.2

Same problem of inequity — rural zones — peri-urban areas.

Problem as President has said — challenge por un desarrollo social con eficiencia económica.

Problem — how to provide services for those who don't have — how to increase the level of health of the marginalized groups to that of the more favoured groups.

Some specific problems

- **AIDS — 1994 — 802 casos acumulados — un aumento progresivo — se estima 30,000 panameños infectados para el año 1997 — predominantemente en el grupo de edad 20-44 años (75%).**
- **Tuberculosis.**
- **Dengue. El dengue clásico hizo su reaparición en julio de 1994.**

The response

The ministries of health together agreed that in order to address the actual and emerging problems.

- **Overriding goal — equity.**
- **Establish some general response goals.**
 - a) **aumentar la duración de la vida saludable de todas las personas, de tal manera que se reduzcan las disparidades de salud entre los grupos sociales;**

- b) asegurar el acceso de toda la población a un conjunto determinado de servicios básicos de salud de calidad aceptable, recalcando los elementos esenciales de la atención primaria;
- c) garantizar la supervivencia y el desarrollo sano de niños y adolescentes;
- d) mejorar la salud y el bienestar de los grupos de población prioritarios escogidos;
- e) garantizar el desarrollo de poblaciones saludables;
- f) erradicar, eliminar o controlar las enfermedades principales que constituyen problemas regionales de salud;
- g) permitir el acceso universal a ambientes y condiciones de vida saludables y seguros;
- h) procurar que todas las personas adopten y mantengan estilos de vida y comportamientos saludables.

Strategic and programmatic orientations

La salud y el desarrollo humano.

El desarrollo de los sistemas y servicios de salud.

La promoción y protección de la salud.

La protección y el desarrollo ambiental.

La prevención y el control de enfermedades.

Will address two of these that are important.

Health and human development.

The need to invest in health.

Health and other components of development.

Health sector reform

There are differences among countries, but the basic purposes are the same.

Concern with cost — Region spends 6,8% PIB on health —costs rising much faster than growth of economy. Panamá 8.7 (1990).

Concern with equity.

Basic approaches

Reorganization.

Financing.

Role of Ministries of Health

- **No process of reform successful without strong government support for the Ministry of Health to lead the reform.**

Healthy public policy.

regulation.

normatization.

Examples - Tourism.

Trade and commerce.

- **In relation to Panama — read the proposals on reform — impressed by the approach to decentralization — activities at local level. But not clear about the progress in having a clearer understanding of the relationship between the social security and Ministry of Health — who is going to assume basic responsibility for the regulation — rectoría and predominantly for delivery of services — the role of the private sector.**
- **Requests to President — challenges for 21st century.**
 - **Unless the State as a whole — led by the President has a different perception of the place and the role of health, there will NOT be optimum human development.**

- **Focus on health of the people and not the health services.**
- **The political dimensions of health.**
 - **Domestic and international stability.**
 - **Points of subregional agreement.**
 - **Health in subregional integration.**
 - Panama president of RESSCA.**
- **Help from PAHO**
- **Our technical cooperation — how structured — role of MOH**
 - **Our strengths**
 - **Presence.**
 - **Technical cooperation.**
 - **Disinterestedness.**
- **Finally**
 - **Can PAHO improve these kinds of contacts with the high political levels?**