

George A. O. Alleyne
Director, PAHO ·
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GENERAL STAFF MEETING
(Washington, D.C.) **

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Thank you all very much for coming. As I said on Monday, 8 February, I would like to discuss further with you some of the issues that were referred to very briefly that afternoon. As you will recall, on Monday I referred to some of the broad directions we will follow in the next four years, and I made special reference, on at least two occasions, to our staff. I wish to thank you again for your contribution and participation over the last four years. I hope I said it as firmly as I possibly could on Monday, but I do not wish there to be any doubt whatsoever about the trust I put in our staff and the gratitude I have to you for the work put in over the past four years. I cannot tell you that on all occasions you or your representatives may have agreed with everything I have done, but I am pleased that over the four years the relationship has not been one of demonizing one another, but appreciating that we all have the same basic goal, we all have the same basic objective.

When I ask myself, “Am I pleased with what we have done?,” the answer is “Yes, I am pleased with what we have done.” However, if I were to be asked, “Am I satisfied with what we have done?,” the answer is no. I am not satisfied with what we have done because there is still so much to do and so little time in which to do it.

Today I want to talk to you about some of the things that will change and some of the things that will remain the same. One of the things that has not changed, as I hope I pointed out clearly on Monday, is my vision of health and the place and role of the Pan American Health Organization. I cannot repeat too often my concept of health as one of the critical options that human development offers, and I cannot point out too often and have us all understand that health as a valued state can be higher in the political agenda. Health, as a theme of value for unifying nations and unifying people, is important. There is a difference between unifying nations and unifying people. Perhaps I will make allusion to that again. I do not tire of repeating the two value principles that are important for us, those of Equity and Panamericanism, and I said on Monday that *we will stay on message*.

Our mission that was crafted four years ago, will not change because I am convinced that it remains valid. There will always be those who want to change a comma or a word or a phrase; there will always be those who perhaps did not participate as actively as they might have wished in the initial phases of its development and may now wish to reshape it. That is laudable and

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understandable. But when I go to our countries and I see it in our Offices representing something to which they look up, something that they know and they feel is a part of what they do, I am convinced that it remains valid, and I will ensure that it continues to be displayed and appear in our publications.

Our Strategic and Programmatic Orientations will still be our guide. However, I have examined some reports of the congruence between these Strategic and Programmatic Orientations and the functional statements of our technical Divisions and I am convinced that we need some significant adjustments. The timing of developing basic documents like the SPO does not allow one to be as perfect as one might wish, and we are going to have to revisit them to make sure that our structure and our function do come close together.

The experience over the last four years has led me to believe, however, that I must introduce some changes in the Secretariat and in our forms of work. I have received many suggestions and comments that have come from the document on the Next Quadrennium that I circulated, the Report of the Bretton Woods Retreat, the Report of the Managers' Meeting, and the Cabinet Retreat that was held from 7 to 8 January. Some persons commented on the Report of that Retreat, pointing out that there were not enough decision points in it, but that was deliberate. That Retreat was focused on getting the opinion of that group of persons on the major issues that we needed to address, and that is why it does not contain specific decision points and does not indicate clearly who is responsible for what. It is obvious that I cannot incorporate all the suggestions that you and your colleagues in the field have made. My reflection over the last few weeks on the changes to be made followed the basic principles of seeking for more programmatic and administrative efficiency and a sharper focus for our work.

I have reflected on what have been the common threads among your suggestions. Many of you have said that we should try to reduce the overlap or duplication as far as possible. On the other hand, there are some that said that we should have more sharing, more togetherness, more collaboration across all groups. Obviously this introduces a paradox, because you cannot have functions very clearly delineated and then advocate for there being areas in which there should be sharing or interchange that leads to more interprogrammatic and interdivisional cooperation and collaboration. So we are going to find in the structure that there are some areas in which it is clear where the responsibility lies, and there are some in which the dominant responsibility is clarified and where there are areas for collaboration and cooperation.

I am going to deal first with the offices as such and then describe some of the changes in operation at the headquarters and field levels. One of the guiding principles behind all of my thinking is that the Organization's interest has to come first. I would hope that personal interests and the Organization's interests can be congruent or can be identical, but where there is any possibility of discrepancy, any possibility of conflict, I have no hesitation in giving precedence to what I consider to be the Organization's interests.

The Office of the Director, the Deputy Director, and the Assistant Director, will remain, obviously. Constitutionally, I have to consult the Executive Committee about the posts of Deputy Director and Assistant Director. When I did this, all of the members without exception, were enthusiastic that Dr. Brandling-Bennett and Dr. Roses should continue in their present

positions. I am very pleased to have them for the next four years. The function of the Office of the Director and Deputy Director will remain the same and the function of the Assistant Director's Office with the support of the Program Analysts will remain essentially the same, except that I wish to see their work focussed even more on the supervision of the technical cooperation in the Representations. There were suggestions that the Program of Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Relief (PED) should move and become a part of one of the Technical Divisions, but I resisted that, and PED will remain where it is, attached to the Assistant Director's Office.

The number of Staff Offices will not change, but I am going to introduce some modifications of their functional statements. For example, I will seek to strengthen DAP's role in the coordination of the planning and programming and I wish to see that the planning for the Secretariat and for our institutional development is developed as implied in the title. We must use the trends and projections in health as ingredients into that planning. The use and understanding of our planning instruments must be enhanced, specially at the country level, and I will put in place, over the year, a mechanism to strengthen the capacity for planning and programming at the country level. It is also important to strengthen our capacity for planning and programming at the Headquarters, and I am going to put in place that mechanism as well.

The functional statement of DPI must emphasize its role in public information about PAHO. I do not intend to make any changes in DBI, but I have to recognize some of the new functions, such as the establishment and maintenance of our electronic communications, and I will make sure that the job descriptions are properly adjusted to recognize the advances we have made in that area.

Our Library is going to remain the documentation center for the Organization. It will not have any responsibility for technical cooperation with our Member States and I am pleased it has not tried to assume that function over the years. I am also pleased that the initiative of indexing the collections in the individual offices has continued.

The Office of Administration continues to be headed by Mr. Boswell. I am going to add some staff to his office, to facilitate the supervision of our administrative practices, specifically at the country level, but also here at the Headquarters as well, and I have said to him that I wish to see the development of approaches that use our communication technology to improve our administration, especially in the field where we have moved, as you have noticed, to professionalize our administration. I am quite happy how the Department of Budget and Finance has worked and I do not anticipate any organizational changes in that Department.

I will convert the Special Program of Vaccines and Immunization into a new Technical Division (HVP) which will be headed by Dr. de Quadros. I will decide later on the internal configuration of that Division but I envisage two programs, one dealing mainly with vaccines, and one dealing with the EPI as such.

I have received comments for some time about the names of our technical units and their heads, and I had thought of changing the term "Program Coordinator." I thought also of changing from Programs to Units, but when I consulted all the Program Coordinators the

predominant response was that the title should remain the same. So democrat as I am, I will not change either the designation or the title. They are going to remain Program Coordinators in charge of Programs.

There will be modifications in the Division of Health Systems and Services Development (HSP). The Program of Health Services Information Systems (HSI) will be incorporated into HSP and that Program as such will be disestablished. I was convinced initially that HSI should be incorporated lock stock and barrel into the Organization and Management of Health Systems and Services Program (HSO), but I received strong arguments that we should think not only of the systems, but also the technologies to support the systems. Perhaps there are two different functions in HSI, which should be distributed within HSP, and not merged uniquely into HSO. I am still convinced that the main function here is the technical cooperation and advising on the systems that are needed in the health care services and on the technology to support those systems. I will be discussing with Dr. López Acuña and the relevant persons how to separate those two functions. But, in any case, the program will be incorporated fully into the rest of HSP.

The Division of Health and Human Development (HDP) will consist of three instead of four programs here, plus the Bioethics Program in Santiago de Chile. The functions of Health Situation Analysis (HDA) will be carried out by a new Special Program that will report to me. My current thinking is that this Special Program will be responsible for the development or assisting in the development of instruments for measuring health inequalities; the development or assisting in the development of databases on the health situation and trends and the analysis of these data. It will also strengthen the national capacities for developing such databases, for analyzing them, and utilizing them for formulation of various policies. It will also strengthen the national capacities for recording vital events. I am convinced that this last area is one to which we need to give more attention and it will be a part of this Special Program. The Program will participate also in the planning for the Secretariat through the provision of data on regional health trends. The work that has begun in DAP on looking at what the Organization might be and planning various scenarios needs to be strengthened by the incorporation of data on the trends of health in the Americas. I see this Special Program as having two major arms: one that deals with the technical cooperation in terms of epidemiological analysis of the health data, and the other one that deals with vital statistics and the need to strengthen the capacity of our countries to develop their programs in this field. One of the functions of that Special Program will be to provide and develop the kind of platform to allow the interchange of data, and permit sensible interchange among the various systems that we now have in place. The creation of this Special Program will require the provision of the necessary administrative and other staff. I have decided that Dr. Castillo will head that Special Program and I will be discussing with him and Dr. LaVertu what needs to be done.

The three other Programs in HDP will remain very much the same. The Program of Women, Health and Development (HDW) will continue to strengthen the capacity, internally and externally, to use a gender perspective as a framework of analysis for health programs and policies and also contributing effectively to the analysis of health manifestations of gender inequity. I was impressed, at the Meeting of the Subcommittee, with the positive echo from the participants about the focus of this particular program and I do not intend to change either its

focus or its location. I see the Program of Public Policy and Health (HDD) continuing to be an important part of the Organization in terms of the analysis of the determinants of health policy and in terms of strengthening the capacity of the major actors and institutions to influence such policies. There are actors and institutions in the Americas which we need to strengthen in order that they might be able to influence health policy in the appropriate fora. I see it concerning itself with the analysis of the changes in certain determinants of health, the macro-economic aspects of national policy and the impact of the interrelationships with respect to health and human development. It will also continue the analysis of the major trends, such as globalization on health policies and the implications of these health policies for health equity.

Health Promotion and Protection (HPP) will continue to have the same number of programs, but the Program of Healthy Lifestyles and Mental Health (HPL) will be renamed; it will be simply the Program of Mental Health, and its designation will be HPM. I see that program as having three major directions: the issue of substance abuse, including tobacco, the care of the mentally ill, and a direction for which I have a lot of expectation, i.e., development and utilization of models for implementation at the primary care level of attention to some of the major mental illnesses that affect large numbers of persons. There are twenty million people in this hemisphere who suffer from one form or another of depression; we must have the instruments to deal with that kind of problem at the primary care level. The days are long past when the treatment of depression was something reserved for psychiatrists. It must also be possible to deal with epilepsy at this level. Therefore, I would wish to see this Program concentrate on these three major issues. There will be the appropriate staff movements to ensure that my concept of having health promotion expressed through the Programs of that Division remain valid and not having health promotion as a free standing program –as it was never intended to be.

I do not envision changes in the Health and Environment Program (HEP) as at the moment I am awaiting the results of an analysis of the functions that HEP has been carrying out. I have said to Mr. Otterstetter that the Programs in that Division will reflect the thematic or disciplinary orientations and not so much the functions or the processes that need to be carried out to make those thematic or disciplinary orientations effective at the level of our countries. There will be no change of Programs in the Disease Prevention and Control Division (HCP).

I will not make any changes in the current form or attachments of our Centers. I do propose, however, to review their functions and perhaps to present our Governing Bodies what is the current state of the Pan American Centers. The matter was raised some time ago in one of the meetings of the Governing Bodies, and I promised to do it. It is just a matter of finding the proper *locus* for this inquiry and the necessary persons or resources. I continue to believe that the Pan American Centers represent an important resource for the countries of the Americas. I continue to believe that they are relevant if properly focused. I have not shifted from the position I took several years ago on the things necessary for there to be a continuity of the Pan American Centers and on the circumstances that would make for their elimination and perhaps their movement to being national centers.

I wish the changes to be effective 1 March 1999, and I will be discussing the next steps with the Chief of Administration. These will involve physical relocation and reallocation or

reassignment of staff. I will be meeting with the Division Directors this afternoon to begin the process of reviewing the functional descriptions that must be included in the new Directive that must be issued. The final version of that Directive will be DAP's responsibility.

I have reviewed your comments about our committees and our governance structure and I have come to the following conclusions. The Director's Cabinet will remain the main body to advise me on policy matters. It will now incorporate some of the functions of the Program Committee, for example overseeing the interprogrammatic cooperation. I am taking some steps to improve its functioning and Dr. Sotelo has already given me a draft of some areas in which it can be improved, with more attention to the papers presented and securing input from various units. As of now the Cabinet will include the Chief of Personnel as a member. The Program Committee as such will cease to function but the meetings of heads of units, for example, to brief ministers of health that have been coordinated by the Assistant Director, obviously will continue. We need to have a coordinated approach to briefing senior officials when they come to the Organization. I have established an ad hoc committee under the Deputy Director to examine our committees and ad hoc groups. When they finish their work, I will be deciding which committees will continue and which have come to an end of their useful life. I intend to create one new Committee on Administrative Matters to be chaired by the Chief of Administration and I will advise you shortly as its terms of reference and its composition. I will ask Mr. Boswell to give me a draft of possible terms of reference and composition of that Committee so I can decide on them by 1 March.

Many of you commented on our administrative practices. I am very aware of the constant tendency to centralization and the need for frequent review of those functions that can be decentralized or delegated. Let me be quite clear that I do not have any special love for centralization or decentralization. You centralize or decentralize depending on whether you can carry out the functions more appropriately in one or other manner. There is nothing intrinsically beautiful about centralization or decentralization, it is just a matter of enhancing the functionality of the unit and its processes.

I have started to look at my own office by reviewing the material that comes to my desk and very shortly I will be deciding which matters can be delegated to other levels. There have been numerous and repeated calls for delegation of administrative authority to the Divisions and I have asked Mr. Boswell to review this with the participation of the Divisions themselves and to let me have the findings and recommendations within a month to determine if there are certain things that can be done more efficiently in a decentralized mode. I believe that after four years, the relationship between the Division Director and the Program Coordinator has to be revisited to determine what should be the level of delegation of authority and how that authority can be delegated. I believe that there can be more delegation of authority based on revision and acceptance of work plans, and I will be discussing with the Division Directors when we do meet, how we can initiate an enquiry to determine how that can be done.

I have reviewed our selection process and I think it needs to be modified. I have discussed this with Dr. LaVertu because I have become convinced of the need for a more structured process that will include interviews of potential candidates as appropriate. Dr. LaVertu will be consulting the Staff Association about this before we finalize the process to be

followed. There are several options, but I have been convinced by her, and also by my appreciation of some of the difficulties that we have encountered from time to time, of the necessity to regularize the process and have a more structured approach to selecting the staff for the Organization. I am going to ask every Division to prepare a staffing plan for me by 1 March, including the projections based on retirement dates of staff as well as the direction of their technical work, because there will be no automatic filling of vacant posts. Every vacant post at the professional as well as general service levels all throughout the Organization will have to be justified.

Four years ago I said we were going to have a new Personnel Evaluation System. We have one now, we are going to press forward with it and I depend on all of you to make sure that it really works. The part of the Personnel Evaluation System that has not been well developed so far, is the one that deals with rewards and Dr. LaVertu is working on possible schemes for rewards to go along with the evaluation system.

I do not envisage major administrative changes at the country level. I have seen the various efforts to make the SPO operational at the country level and I am convinced that it is feasible. I am convinced that the possible problem of there being rigid divisions between the technical units inhibiting our making the SPO operational at the country level is a myth. Those Representatives that are clear about the priorities at the country level, and about what resources they have at their disposal, have no difficulty in making the SPO operational. I continue to trust in their good sense to do just that and see that our structures at the regional level do not frustrate their possibility of making the SPO operational.

I am concerned about the possibility of excessive individual reviews in our field offices, and I am asking the Assistant Director to review the various instruments and practices that we have in place, to try to make them more rational, or at least complementary. We now have monitoring visits, administrative reviews, transfers, audits, and I have the sensation that sometimes our offices feel that they have been overwhelmed with over-inspection, as many times the same kind of information is provided for different purposes.

There was frequent mention of the multiple requests to our Representatives for similar information and this must stop. Any questionnaire for information to our Country Offices must be cleared by the Assistant Director before it is sent. If it is not, it will not be answered, period. We cannot have multiple requests for similar kinds of information.

APL has just finished a review of our contracting of national professionals and from discussion with the Assistant Director it is clear to us that these posts must be programmed into the annual program that is reviewed and approved at the end of the year. I do not wish to change the selection process or eliminate the authority of the Representative to make short-term appointments, although the final selection will be cleared by the Assistant Director before it is presented to me for signature.

We have discussed for many years the possibility of more sharing of staff between the various parts of the Organization and the experience with Mitch has shown me that it is possible to do this. Many times there is expertise in our offices but we hire this expertise from elsewhere,

instead of calling on what exists within our own Organization. Part of the problem in the past has been lack of information about what expertise really does exist. One Division, Health and Environment, has shown me how it can be done and they are producing a dossier of minicurriculum vitae of all the staff which is available to everyone. We wish to see the same thing happen for the whole of the Organization, so there can be much more interchange and sharing of staff across limits.

The aforementioned brings me to our intercountry staff. You know that our intercountry staff are a relic of the Area Offices and they have just remained and remained. I have decided that the time has come to assign progressively many of these intercountry staff to the countries, because *de facto* they spend most of their time in the country in which they are situated. We will encourage interchange of all staff. I must make it clear that I am not saying as of now that all twenty intercountry staff are going to be assigned to the countries. We are going to do this slowly, but I have already identified a couple of them that I am going to assign to the country programs.

I am pleased with the creation of the Staff Association and Administration Joint Advisory Committee and I wish to see that continue and at the request of the Staff Association, I am going to schedule more regular meetings, instead of having them, as in the past year, on an irregular basis.

The Advisory Committee on Staff Development is going to continue and I have to thank Dr. Barahona for the work he has done up until now. I have seen an interim report which is very good and I am pleased that the Committee will be working very closely with the Staff Development Unit in proposing some innovative approaches to strengthening the capacity of the staff in the Organization to carry our work forward.

I wish to share with you very briefly some of the discussions that took place at the Executive Board that have repercussions for us as well as some other events of my two weeks in Geneva. At the invitation of the Governments of Canada and the United States, I made a presentation to the diplomatic representatives of the countries of the Americas in Geneva. It was very well received. Many of those representatives have asked how they can be helpful to PAHO, how they can know more about PAHO, and we have agreed that it is our responsibility, not only to talk to ambassadors here, but to provide to the diplomatic representations in Geneva more information about the Organization and what is happening here. I was really very touched by the avidity for knowledge about the Organization in Geneva. One thing that became very clear to me from discussions with them is that, whereas in the past much of the detailed technical briefing for the Executive Board and the Assembly has been to the Director, and I have a briefing book to which many of you contributed faithfully, but in addition, I wish to make sure that we brief our representatives, both at the Board and the Assembly, on the technical issues concerning those meetings. I was very pleased when at least one of the Americas' representatives on the Board consulted the briefing notes that one of you had prepared for me and was very grateful to have this information of what was going on in the Americas to color his own intervention and participation.

One of the most important issues at the Executive Board which is relevant for our discussion here is the budget. All of you should know that as a result of the decision in last year's World Health Assembly, the fraction of our budget for 2000-2001 that comes from the World Health Organization in Geneva will be reduced. We will have our budget cut, at the beginning of next biennium, by five million dollars and this reduction will continue increasingly over the next two biennia. This is the result of the redistribution of the funding available for regional allocations to provide increase funding for Africa and Europe.

I have delayed making a very careful match between our structure and the structure in Geneva for obvious reasons. I knew that I would introduce some changes in our structure, so now I am in a position to provide a crosswalk between our structure and the clusters in Geneva and vice-versa. We will not adopt the same structure as Geneva. The Director-General has agreed that it is not necessarily desirable that all of the Regions have the same structure as Geneva. There is no perfect organizational structure, it has the logic of the persons who created it, and the structure I have decided upon, that has six Technical Divisions, is convenient for our work. The capacities vary so much among the Regional Offices that the Director-General and the Regional Directors have all agreed that it is nonsense to think of an exact replication of the Geneva structure in the Regional Offices. We have agreed however, as we have done from the time I have been here at PAHO, that we will report to Geneva along the lines of their structure and Dr. Sotelo has an unenviable job of trying to reorganize our own SPO so that the objectives and the expected results do fit into the Geneva structure. He has done a very good job of it.

I am looking forward to the next four years. I hope I made it quite clear on Monday that the possibilities for success of PAHO depend very much on our staff. Four years ago at the end of a similar presentation, I repeated a phrase that my mother often used. "If you can't say anything good about someone, say nothing at all." Some people have said that that is too flippant and that it really means that you cannot be critical. That is not really what she meant. She meant to refer to the perverse, sniping and carping criticism that is destructive rather helpful. It is infrequent but unfortunately it still happens in our Organization, and I suppose in every group of human beings it will continue. I am not a perfectionist, but I wish it were not so. We still have too many examples of persons not doing the work they are supposed to do. We still have the example of supervisors being ungentlemanly or unladylike in dealing with staff. That should not be so in an Organization that should pride itself on good mental health; one that should pride itself on promoting an image of a healthy Organization in which interpersonal relationships should not be a major cause of concern. One of the instruments that has made this behavior more pernicious is the Internet. I have seen people in a fit of temper or pique, write something and press a button and off it goes. In the old days, when you had to write with a quill you could not do that. You would spend five minutes writing it and at the end of the five minutes you would have calmed down and you would tear up the note. Now it is so simple to type and to send it through the Internet and create the kind of noise that is not healthy for an organization. So I am going to ask that you think twice before you press that key. Think when you put out this message whether you would really wish to stand before the person face to face and say it. Thank God this kind of behavior is very infrequent, but I believe that even one incident is one too many.

"If you can't say anything good, say nothing at all."

I end on this note because of the angst I have that we be the best, but in no way should my ending in this manner diminish the tremendous affection I have for all of you all over the Organization and the hope I have that together over the next four years we can see many more good things happen for the people of the Organization and for the health of the people of the Americas.

Thank you very much.

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