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**PUBLIC SERVICE IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS\*\***  
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First, let me thank Dean Boufford for the invitation to address you this morning. It is not only that I wish to follow tradition, I am genuine and sincere when I begin by congratulating the graduates on this, their day. It is a marvelous thing to have jumped any educational hurdle, and these ceremonial rites of passage help, I think, to mark and seal the importance of the accomplishment. I speak with feeling when I congratulate the parents and loved ones who are here to share the joy of this day with you and will no doubt tell you how this joy is mixed with relief. I speak from personal experience and with some feeling about this, as my last child will be graduating from business school in ten days.

As I was preparing my remarks for this morning, I called another one of my children who is a professor of engineering in a university in this country and asked him what kind of profound message I should give – what kind of grand charge I should leave with you. I was chagrined when he advised me to leave with you this bit of advice. When you cash your stock options, please do not forget your alma mater that is responsible for your having the money to invest and having the good sense not to invest in derivatives.

After accepting Dean Boufford's invitation and reading the material she sent me about your school, I confess to a little envy. I thought of how fortunate you have been to have attended a school whose very name and whose total remit speaks to the importance of public service and the task of providing persons from all over the world with education "such that you can transform your personal commitment into public leadership."

I recall the time when Robert Wagner was elected Mayor of this city. I came to this place during my holidays, developed a love for it and the Brooklyn Dodgers, and learnt what it was to be called, boy, and not as a term of endearment. Robert Wagner's was a good example of what public service and leadership was about.

I thought I would ignore the instructions of my son and share with you some of the experiences I have had along the way to becoming the head of an international

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

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organization devoted to public service in health. I would like to reflect with you on the kinds of challenges you will assuredly face as you work in public administration and hopefully become leaders in your chosen field. The dedication to leadership in this area calls for much humility and a constant reminder of what we are here for and what purpose we serve. I can think of few finer descriptions of this than Benjamin Franklin's prayer as set out in his autobiography.

O powerful Goodness, bountiful Father, merciful Guide! Increase in me that wisdom which discovers my truest interests; strengthen my resolution to perform what that wisdom dictates. Accept my kind offices to thy other children, as the only return in my power for thy continual favors to me.

The essence of our efforts is to divine how to discharge those kind offices to others, which is the nub and pith of public service. And to tell you how I learnt a bit about how to do it, I will refer again to Benjamin Franklin and an English proverb he quotes: "He that would thrive, must ask his wife."

While I was busy with my own career in research in the University of the West Indies, I happened to read one of my wife's textbooks entitled, "Bureaucracy in Modern Society" by Peter Blau, which opened my eyes to the whole realm of the sociology of organizations, and clarified for me why some structures functioned and others did not. I came to look for the evidence in my own institution of the kinds of rigid Weberian hierarchical arrangements that created bureaupathology and gave a bad name to public service bureaucrats, and hoped I could see in my own work what Max Weber described as the purposeful rationality in which goals and means were rationally selected.

As I grew older, and became an avid fan of management and passed through the various fads that promised organizational nirvana, I came to appreciate more keenly that there was no absolute all-knowing guru who had the answer for the dissimilar problems of private and public institutions. And as I assumed more responsibility in an international organization, it was brought home to me even more painfully that one had to be exceedingly discriminating in accepting some of the nostrums that were offered. It is about that group of organizations that I wish to speak to you, as I believe that they are often grossly misrepresented and misunderstood, but do hold out hope for facilitating the advent of a better world for both the strong and the weak.

Their very name, "international," is significant in that it affirms the central dominance of nation states. In matters of critical global policy, the nation state will continue to play a major role and indeed the news of their demise has been greatly exaggerated. It is true that their roles have changed over the years and this is natural. Peter Drucker has given a compelling analysis of the cycles of pluralism that have seen the nation states change their position. With the disappearance of pluralist feudalism about the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the nation state became the locus of virtually all authority and power. And then towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we saw the growth of institutions that were initially, mainly national and related to business and commerce. Over the past 100 years the number of these institutions has grown exponentially, and one of their essential characteristics has been their narrowness of focus and function.

Many are no longer national, but contrive to have their work and influence permeate and diffuse beyond national borders while still maintaining their unifocal nature. When we think of these global institutions, our tendency is to think of the commercial giants. But the international organizations are themselves part of this new pluralism.

I foresee that the world in which you will discharge your public leadership will have to come to grips with this major challenge of growing pluralism. You, as leaders of nations, national institutions, global private institutions and international organizations, will have to find a way to ensure that there is some mechanism to work together to solve some of the megaproblems that we have now and the ones we can predict. I do not see international organizations participating in any way in the direction of global private institutions. It is more likely that we will see the governance of international organizations embracing others beside nations and their formal representatives. These megaproblems are none other than those the Secretary General of the United Nations will put before the Millennium Assembly—to have a world in which the process of globalization promotes, rather than inhibits the possibility that there is freedom from want, freedom from fear, and an environmentally sustainable future.

While everyone is clear that the states have changed and the large global institutions are changing, it is not so well known that international organizations have changed and are changing. In the great heyday of international organizations after World War II, there was the feeling that nation states would cede some part of their sovereignty to an institution that would seek to address the major problems of the day, with the emphasis on maintaining peace and preventing war. The Secretary General in his report to the Millennium Assembly set out in clear language what has been known if not expressed by most. The UN, as the premier international institution, was described thus:

"For its first forty-five years it lived in the grip of the cold war; prevented from fulfilling some of its core missions, but discovering other critical tasks in that conflict's shadow. For ten years now, the United Nations has been buffeted by the tumultuous changes of the new era, doing good work in many instances, but falling short in others."

I know more about the good work done by the UN and other international organizations in health. In this field, as in other social areas, the dominant approach was initially technical assistance in that the strength of the strong could be channeled towards helping the weak to recover through building their capacity to fend for themselves. In health, there was a missionary approach to the relations between nations. The change we have witnessed is an appreciation of the fact that many of the really important problems need genuine international action. It is a matter of mutual self-interest that nations work together. The local effect, of events taking place far away that is at the heart of the globalization phenomenon is not confined to any one group of nations.

This is seen most acutely in the field of infectious diseases. The carriers of disease whether human, animal, insect, or food, move freely from one part of the globe to another and, except for humans, do not fill custom or immigration forms. There is a global ecology of microbes that most of us hardly even recognize. A bacterium that

becomes resistant to an antibiotic in one part of the world, can appear with ease in another with dramatic consequences for the new susceptible human host it encounters. Antibiotics in feed given to animals in one country to enhance their growth may stimulate the development of resistant strains that are eventually found in a far distant land.

Health is a matter of universal concern and the concept of global public good is being applied to it. Public goods provide benefits that go beyond a single person; they are provided for the enjoyment of all. Clean water and good health of people are public goods, and are beyond the capacity of any single nation to provide them. No single nation acting alone can prevent the spread of antimicrobial resistance to antibiotics. And yet, although those influences on health escape the control of a single nation, it is national policy that determines what a particular nation will do. One of the challenges you will face is resolving this apparent contradiction. To attain many national goals in health, countries have to cooperate internationally. Although international cooperation is sometimes seen domestically as an erosion of national authority, it is crucial for the success of much national policy. It is proper for a Minister of Health to put forward as part of his or her national policy the elimination of a particular disease, especially a communicable one, and many of his or her constituents, when they praise the success of the policy, are not aware of the relevance of the international cooperation that was necessary to ensure the outcome of the domestic policy. It is the role of the international organization to foster that cooperation.

It is also clearer that international and global are not coterminous. While our organizations may reflect international governance and funding, many of their actions may involve only small groups of nations that make up their constituency. Indeed, the argument is often put that the mechanisms for the aversion of global threats or the provision of the crucial global public goods can best be achieved through the translation of these into more manageable regional portions. The countries that share cultural or historical ties are more likely to cooperate among themselves. I can attest to the truth of this in health in the Americas where all countries participate actively in the Pan American Health Organization. Not every focus of international cooperation has to involve a global threat or opportunity. International cooperation may take place among a small group of countries, and it is a part of our philosophy and practice to stimulate this cooperation among small groups of countries, emphasizing that it is cooperation among countries, and not only cooperation among developing countries.

These international organizations, like any other organization will need leaders, and will need to be managed effectively if they are to remain useful and retain what is perhaps the most essential ingredient of their success. That ingredient is trust—the trust of the nations whose cooperation they facilitate. They all tend to be decentralized, as they must maintain a presence near their primary constituents.

When you become the leader of an international health organization, your first task will be to establish and transmit clearly your vision of what you wish to be now and in the future. There has to be some notion of the size and color of the house on the hill. It will not be enough to believe that, because your heart is pure and your cause

intrinsically noble, you will engender the needed trust either among those within the organization or the nations that you serve. I suppose it will be said that in our case it is easy to see what health might represent for humankind. After all, in the Millenium Survey, which is the largest ever public opinion survey, it was shown that people valued good health and a happy family life more highly than anything else. It is a necessary of life, and as Ghandi said so simply, "Every man has an equal right to the necessaries of life even as birds and bees have."

But the vision you will project will see health important not only as a good to be enjoyed individually or collectively; you must see it as also instrumental in ensuring the acquisition and enjoyment of those essential freedoms that Amartya Sen points out as being critical for that development that equates with the flowering of the human spirit. It is not enough to keep this kind of vision a closely guarded secret. Your task is to espouse and champion it—to have all who will listen, get to hear and understand it.

You will also have a mission crafted that says how you plan to realize your vision. In our case it was quite simple. We had no doubt that as an Organization we had to cooperate with our countries and stimulate cooperation among them with the aim of achieving Health For All and by All. Health For All in our case is not some hackneyed slogan that we mouth vacuously. We see it as representing the ideal of having a world in which the social injustices and unfairness that make for inequity in health be no more.

I referred to your need to manage a decentralized organization that would have a presence close to the nations it serves. I am one of those who believe that we cannot speak of international cooperation, by the very term focus on nation states and then decide that we will be discriminatory selective in our treatment of them. We cannot decide that some we will call donors and some we will distinguish with the pejorative term, recipients. For this reason, we maintain a close presence in all the countries of the Americas and stick to the view that the delivery of global public goods involves all nations.

The problem of managing decentralized organizations has been with us, I suppose, forever. I have found, as others before me that there are some critical administrative steps that one must take to ensure that there is consistency of action while respecting the particularities of the individual countries. First, there is a need for fluid communication and information about the decisions taken at all levels. There must be a clear identification of the roles of the various levels, there must be consistency of decision making, and the ability to question and have answers given. But I am sure you were taught all this here at Wagner. There is one aspect of maintaining unity and consistency that I have come to recall from my youth when I studied Roman history. Why would the Roman senators feel comfortable as they saw the proconsuls head off down the Appian Way to some distant land, that they would behave in a responsible manner and follow the standard operating procedures without the benefit of fax or email? Why was there similarity of administration throughout the British Empire? I have wondered whether these proconsuls were so socialized as Romans that their behavior was virtually assured. I will put it to you that one of your tasks as leader will be to ensure the

socialization of units that they share the same vision accept the same values and have the same mission.

I do not have to stress the importance of personal knowledge of the territory. The commitment of the bureaucrat is not enough. There must be involvement and engagement. Perhaps the one area in which your engagement is critical is in the production and use of information. Information is as powerful a change agent as the fire that Prometheus stole from Mount Olympus. Without it you will never be able to demonstrate to your nation clients those areas in which their cooperation is crucial and they will never be able to demonstrate the success of their national policies that depended so much on international cooperation. Indeed surveillance of diseases is of such importance that it has been qualified as a global public good.

The tasks in international cooperation in health are often onerous and sometimes dangerous, but the rewards are many for those who work in the field. There is no better feeling than knowing that you helped to relieve some of the suffering that is unnecessary, and there is nothing more humbling than the knowledge of work still undone. In our Region we have made considerable advances in health as shown by the traditional indicators. Fewer children die, adults live longer, so we have to confront the problem of an aging population. But there are still major problems. AIDS is a grim reminder of the fact that the days of plagues are not over. Women still die unnecessarily in childbirth and that old captain of death —tuberculosis— is still reported in one quarter of a million persons annually. The gaps in health that we call inequities because they are unfair and unjust are still very much with us. These are the challenges, but with persons like yourselves occupying positions of leadership they can be overcome.

But this is a day for celebration, so let me quote from one of my favorite philosophers—Louis Armstrong:

I see trees of green, red roses too  
 I see them bloom for me and you  
 And I think to myself, what a wonderful world!  
 I see skies of blue and clouds of white  
 The brightness of day the darkness of night  
 And I think to myself, what a wonderful world!

Enjoy this wonderful world!