PAHO Director urges faster progress toward universal health in the Americas



Washington, D.C, September 30 (PAHO/WHO) – The goal of "universal health" should be within reach in the Americas – a region that has been a world leader in health progress. But stepped-up action and investments are needed to speed progress toward universal health, said the Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Carissa F. Etienne, today during the opening ceremony of the 57th PAHO Directing Council.

The remarks were made before top health authorities from North, South and Central America and the Caribbean, who are meeting in Washington this week to seek agreement on strategies and plans for tackling common health challenges. These include a plan to reduce heart disease by eliminating industrially produced trans-fatty acids, a strategy to make access to organ, tissue and cell transplants more equitable, and a plan to improve the quality of care in health services delivery.

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Addressing more than a hundred delegates and civil society representatives attending the meeting, PAHO Director Etienne cited recent health successes achieved by countries of the Americas, outlined in the

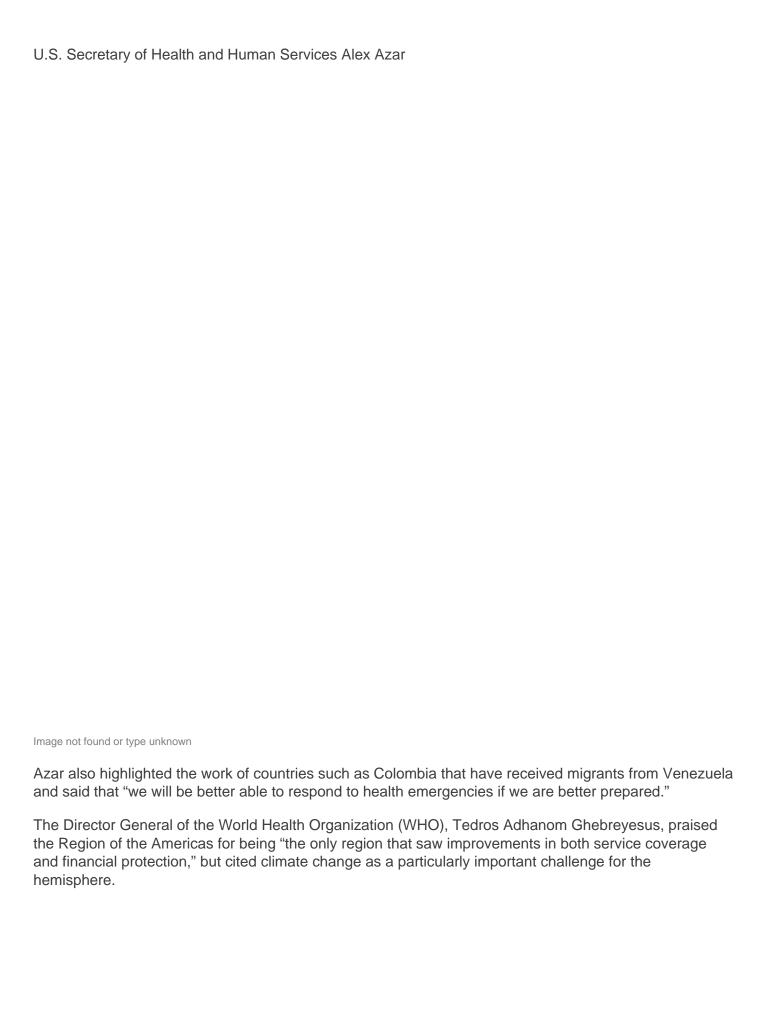
2019 Global Monitoring Report: "Primary Health Care on the Road to Universal Health Coverage," which was launched at the United Nations General Assembly last week. These include the highest rating of any region on a global measure of health services coverage (79 out of 100 on the UHC Service Coverage Index) and a significant increase in average regional public expenditure in health, from 3.8 to 4.2% of GDP over the last five years.

Despite such progress, however, she pointed to an urgent need for joint action on larger health challenges which, "if not addressed will negatively impact our collective ability to deliver" universal health for the people of the Americas.

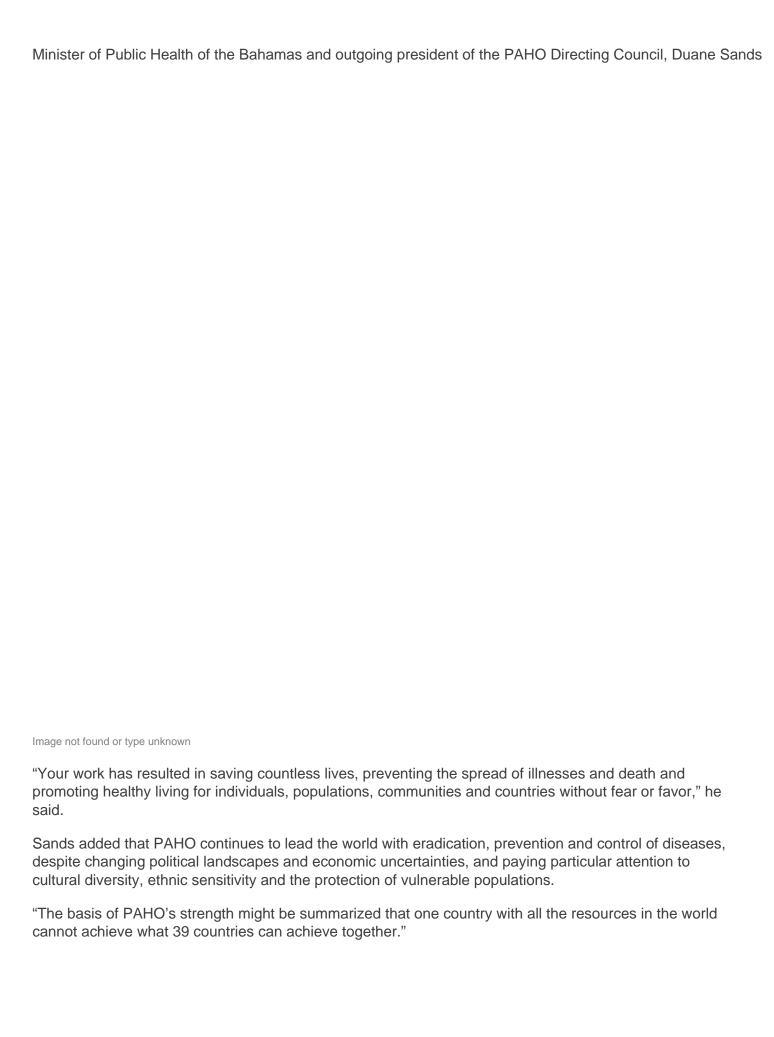
These challenges include global warming and climate change, the prevention of rapid and uncontrolled infectious disease spread, antimicrobial resistance, mass migration and the production of safe food and water, among others "for which the risks, challenges and potential impacts extend beyond national borders," noted Etienne.

She called on the ministers and delegates to "work together cooperatively for mutual global good across many areas."

U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar emphasized the "proud history of cooperation in the Americas on health" and called for continued collaboration. "It is important to remember that the ultimate goal of our collaborative work is health for all people," he said.











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