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**OPENING REMARKS OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
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Thank you, Dr. Mirta Roses, for the kind introduction. On behalf of Secretary Sebelius, who unfortunately had to travel today, I want to thank you and your staff for organizing this meeting.

Welcome to all my fellow national health officials from throughout the Americas. This is the 50th meeting of the Pan American Health Organization's Directing Council. The United States is especially pleased you are here with us in Washington to celebrate this milestone, and the Department of Health and Human Services is honored to be a solid partner with health ministries throughout the Region.

When PAHO was still the International Sanitary Bureau, you set the standard for controlling infectious disease across borders. The principles of Pan Americanism and open exchange of information are as relevant today as they were in 1924 when our countries signed the Pan American Sanitary Code.

These principles have been critical to freeing this hemisphere of some of the planet's most terrifying diseases. When the PAHO Directing Council held its first meeting, polio epidemics caused panic and smallpox was rampant. According to the World Health Organization there were as many as 50 million cases of smallpox worldwide in the early 1950s.

Thanks to some determined, hard-working people—and especially those in PAHO—we were able to bring mass vaccination campaigns to the people of the Americas. You are a big reason that our hemisphere saw its last case of smallpox in 1973. Our countries haven't seen a case of polio since 1991.

PAHO's dedication to cooperation across borders set the standard for the world's response to the global H1N1 flu pandemic. When the new virus was first identified in this area of the world, PAHO member countries took immediate action to share surveillance data and expertise. The U.S. was proud to be able to contribute our experts from the Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention to the surveillance effort, and 34 million dollars worth of antiviral medication to the PAHO stockpile last year.

We also gained from our membership in this Organization. We especially appreciate being able to learn from those of you in the southern hemisphere with earlier flu seasons—your experience was invaluable to our efforts to fight H1N1 in this country.

And we continue to be impressed by PAHO member countries' solidarity and generosity when disaster strikes one of our own, as it did last January with the devastating earthquake in Haiti.

This week we are turning our attention to the work ahead. Many of the same public health priorities you have set for our hemisphere—including safer hospitals, stronger immunization programs, ending hunger, and eradicating mother-to-child transmission of HIV as well as other STDs—are the same priorities the U.S. has set for ourselves at home.

The President referred to these challenges when he spoke to the UN summit on the Millennium Development Goals last week. Some of you were there.

As the President said, we need to put to rest the old myth that development is mere charity that does not serve our interests, and reject the cynicism that says certain countries—and the people who live in them—are condemned to perpetual poverty, while others are not.

The world does face urgent challenges—persistently high levels of maternal and child mortality and rapid urbanization are two persistent examples. As many as half a million women die every year from pregnancy or pregnancy-related causes. When even one child's death is a tragedy, the millions of infant and child deaths globally are heartbreakingly high.

And movement of rural people into burgeoning urban centers is spreading so fast across the globe, that it has outpaced the ability of many governments to make life in cities safe, rewarding, and healthy—especially for the poor. Today, over half of the world's people live in cities, with more than one billion living in urban slums.

With ten years down and just five years before our development targets come due, President Obama called on us last week to do better. He made it clear that the U.S. fully endorses the eight Millennium Development Goals, and is committed not only to their achievement but to their lasting impact. This means viewing development as far more than just assistance, and helping to create the conditions where assistance will no longer be necessary, as countries progress from poverty to equitable prosperity.

It means promoting broad-based economic growth and good governance. And in health, this means helping countries build stronger health systems and deliver better care—just as we are working toward that goal through our efforts at health care reform here in the United States.

Addressing these issues is at the heart of President Obama's Global Health Initiative. The U.S. is strongly committed to working with you, our partners here in the Western Hemisphere, to reach the Millennium Development Goals in our own neighborhood and around the world.

If anyone can make progress on the Millennium Development Goals, it's this Organization. Look how far we've come in reducing infectious disease. The PAHO vaccine procurement fund—which turns 30 this year—has significantly reduced vaccine-preventable diseases in the Americas. Today, few people—from the most remote village to the largest city—can remember how terrifying it was when a report of smallpox ran through a community. Today's parents in the Western Hemisphere no longer need fear the devastation of polio's crippling assault on their children. And the PAHO vaccine procurement fund has helped as well in controlling measles and rubella, which are no longer a threat in the Americas, thanks to our common efforts.

Soon we hope to add pneumococcal and rotavirus disease to the list of conditions that have been successfully controlled through immunization, and more new vaccines are on the way. These accomplishments are PAHO's pride, and the United States is equally proud to be a solid partner in these efforts.

We are all in this together. Global health is a shared responsibility and we all have an obligation and an interest in promoting it. People don't have to look any further than PAHO to see what that means.

Please accept our sincere wishes for a productive and enjoyable meeting. I hope that many of you will attend the reception the United States is co-hosting with PAHO tomorrow evening, to celebrate the milestones we've reached this year, and to plan for future achievements that will benefit all our people.

Thank you.