



## **COPA COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROTECTION**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil  
May 10, 2005**

*WHEREAS* one of the objectives of the 2003–2007 Strategic Plan of the Pan American Health Organization is to “increase the number of countries able to demonstrate inclusion of health priorities [...] in the negotiation and implementation of trade and integration agreements”;

*WHEREAS* the public healthcare systems in the Americas may be affected primarily by two World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements—the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of International Property Rights (TRIPS)—as well as the future agreement on the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA);

*WHEREAS* the changes the sector is undergoing in various countries of the Americas and around the world tend to be giving private suppliers a growing role in the provision of healthcare services;

*WHEREAS* in addition to reducing government leeway, these changes could lead to a healthcare system in which access to services and quality of care depend on an individual's ability to pay, to the detriment of the poorest populations;

*WHEREAS* severe public health problems affect many less-developed countries, especially problems resulting from HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy, tuberculosis, malaria, and other epidemics;

*REITERATING* the commitments made at the last meetings of the COPA Commission on Health and Social Protection in Ixtapan de la Sal, Mexico, in 2002, and in Caracas, Venezuela, in 2003, to “defend the public and universal nature of our healthcare systems, and to approve no law or policy that would aim to privatize them, thereby depriving the most underprivileged citizens of the care to which they are entitled”;

***WE, the representatives of the congresses and parliamentary assemblies of unitary, federal, federated, and associated states, regional parliaments, and interparliamentary organizations, gathered in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil, for the 6th COPA General Assembly:***

*UNDERTAKE* to hold public consultations and coordinate civil society partnership efforts with a view to understanding our societies' healthcare concerns, advising that these concerns be addressed in healthcare policies, and suggesting that our governments increase healthcare funding and develop innovative solutions to maintain it;

*UNDERTAKE* to inform our governments of our populations' concerns, notably with regard to HIV/AIDS, to ensure they are taken into account in developing positions and negotiation strategies;

*DEMAND* that our governments show greater transparency as to the impacts of trade agreements on access to healthcare and medicines and to take gender factors into account;

*RECOMMEND* that the health committees of our respective parliaments communicate directly with our countries' negotiators in order to closely monitor the course of negotiations and inform negotiators of citizens' healthcare concerns;

*URGE* our governments to report back to the health committees of our respective assemblies at all stages of the negotiation process in order to keep us informed and involve us in the development of objectives, positions, and trade commitments with an impact on our healthcare systems;

*UNDERTAKE* to defend before the WTO and any other international body every state's right to reform its public healthcare system and develop measures in the sector;

*UNDERTAKE*, as legislators, to ensure that our respective states restrictively implement the international trade agreements adopted in order to minimize their impact on public healthcare systems and maintain maximum control over policy development in the sector;

*UNDERTAKE* to work in cooperation with our respective governments and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) to develop a regional agreement that takes precedence over all trade agreements implemented in the Americas and whose objective is to protect our states' right to preserve their own public health policies;

*URGE* leaders, regardless of their personal, moral, or religious convictions, to make our populations' public health a priority, particularly for adolescents and youth, notably by using condoms as a preventive method for diseases like HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, and unwanted pregnancy; and

*RECOMMEND* that all parliamentarians in attendance at the 6th COPA General Assembly in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil, and notably members of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, follow up on this recommendation with all committees of the parliamentary assemblies of the Americas responsible for gender equality as well as all government bodies and departments with similar responsibilities in order to inform them of the importance of closely monitoring trade agreement negotiations to ensure that public health systems are not compromised, which would be to the detriment of the most disadvantaged populations, particularly women.