



Regional Meeting of Mesoamerica and the Caribbean for the Refoundation and Transformation of the Health Systems

Dominican Republic May 16, 17 and 18, 2023

DECLARATION

We have gathered at the Regional Meeting of Mesoamerica and the Caribbean on the Refoundation and Transformation of Health Systems, in the warmth and fraternity of the Caribbean, Maroon, Afro-Caribbean, indigenous, Garifuna and Creole, Gaga peoples and identities. The meeting was attended by the following countries: Dominican Republic, Haiti, Colombia, Nicaragua, Guatemala and the organizations ASECSA-Guatemala, CISAS Nicaragua PHM-Colombia and PHM Global, Socio Cultural Movement of Haitian Workers (MOSCTHA-Haiti), ALAMES-RD, MAELA-RD, FUNDELOSA, MAMA MALTA, COSALUP, Asociación de Mujeres Trabajadoras, Centro de Educación Popular, Centro Valpiana, Red de Mujeres por la Salud, Red de Jóvenes por la Salud, Núcleo de Mujeres de la Victoria, Mujeres Unidas, Grupo de Participación Social, Fundación Expresión, Salud y Género, Organización Adultos Mayores Libertador, Coordinación de Mujeres de Izquierda, HAGROECA Jungla Verde, Centro Lemba y Magua, Médicos del Mundo Argentina and Movimiento de Mujeres Dominicano Haitianas (MUDHA).

Gathered together, the people who do not give up and do not give in, always fighting for transformations and changes, we make the following **DECLARATION:**

The Caribbean and Central American regions are immersed in neoliberal policies that have privatized and commodified health, public and social institutions. This dominant model promotes patriarchy, class exploitation, subjugation and ethnic/racial discrimination. These policies have deepened extreme poverty, inequality, social exclusion, have contributed to the marginalization, disintegration of families, communities at the urban/rural level and to increasing migration.

The regions of Central America and the Caribbean share common elements: imperial borders, a dependent capitalist economic system, extractivist and based on unequal exchange with the richer nations of the North that generalizes poverty, hunger, depredation of nature and poor health. Large multinational corporations of insurance, technologies and health services, in coexistence with multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the WHO and the World Trade Organization, invest and extract capital freely imposing policies centered on business with disease, intellectual property rights, the marginalization of ancestral and traditional health knowledge and practices, the exploitation of health workers and the lucrative sale of services. The World Bank and others are misrepresenting universal coverage.

The privatization of health care and primary health care to promote privatization and imperial reforms that, using our public and social financial resources, limit the potential of public services by privatizing them and turning them into businesses whose objective is profit. Public policies are promoted to multiply the wealth of a few with power and privileges to the detriment of the prosperity of the majority and the reproduction of life. Health systems today are systems of illness and death, and the capitalist companies that reproduce them do not care for patients but for clients.

The people of Haiti are going through a humanitarian crisis, ungovernability and violence that should receive our attention and solidarity. Public and health services are not working and it is evident in the precariousness of their health and life indicators. There is corruption and state malfunctioning. There are problems of access to drinking water, food and supplies. There continue to be cholera outbreaks, increased maternal and infant mortality rates. The situation and life of Haitian migrant women is not humane, they are discriminated against and rejected because they are undocumented, because they do not speak the language well. Many Haitian women have given birth in the streets.

In the midst of these complex expressions of the Mesoamerican and Caribbean region, which has a rich cultural diversity and history of struggles and permanent demands, we find postponed demands for the construction of public, universal, integral, solidarity-based and free health systems. The struggle for public health systems without barriers, equitable, intercultural, revitalizing the original ancestral systems. The right to health remains a banner of progress against the hegemony of medical-financial-industrial-pharmaceutical power.

The transformation of health systems implies social mobilization of the peoples and popular sectors. The native peoples have been preserving and strengthening their own ancestral and health systems as a proposal in the face of reforms, in the face of mercantilist and biomedical concepts.

In the dialogue on the daily lessons learned from the struggles of our peoples for good living and health, we have reaffirmed that PHC is not only services, nor community participation and intersectoral action focused only on social determinants as isolated factors, but that it is necessary to work with a social determination approach that contributes to change the economic growth model for capital accumulation and enable a new economic and social order based on social justice, democracy and peace at national and international levels.

It is necessary to revitalize the principles of PHC; health cannot be improved if structures and the capitalist economic model are not transformed. We must start from the bottom up, from the participation of people and communities, empowering their capacities to solve their own problems.

We will promote the struggle for the democratization of land ownership, food sovereignty and nutritional security because the best medicine is food, access to drinking water and the enjoyment of a healthy environment. These are slogans of the native peoples that we must follow. Health begins with food, the care of water sources and nature.

In the face of the climate and civilizational crisis that threatens the existence of all forms of life on the planet, we need another model of life in a harmonious relationship with biodiversity, with Mother Earth. The activities of young people who rescue our native and ancestral cultures are

today an expression of popular aesthetics that defends life, which we must value and promote. All these struggles must contribute to the emancipation of our peoples.

Transforming health systems to contribute to good living implies re-founding them by decolonizing and de-medicalizing the knowledge and practices imposed by the imperial policies of the West; it implies transforming states by building them with the peoples and at the service of the peoples; it implies creating plurinational societies that change this civilizational model of life that we lead. We must encourage future generations to eat well, to eat healthy, because it is the only way for this civilization to survive. To respect the Pacha Mama, to love mother earth we must have tenderness for her, we must be in love with her.

The concept of health of the native peoples goes beyond an anthropocentric vision, it is life in plenitude, in harmony with everything that surrounds us, the cosmos, mother earth. Health is also gender justice; therefore we call for a frontal fight against femicide and all forms of gender violence; health is peace, that is to say no to imperial wars to plunder our natural resources and cultural wealth; that is to say no to the occupation of our territories and peoples.

We call on you to maintain and strengthen solidarity with the people of Haiti, a fighting people who, according to our history, were the first to shake off the yoke of slavery and emancipate themselves from European colonial rule; they were the people who inspired us in the struggle for freedom. Haiti is the descendant of indomitable African migrants who still maintain and care for their roots. Haiti continues to be punished by those who have forced it to pay with its blood for its daring and determination to achieve its sovereignty and freedom.

The People's Health Movement strives to create economic, social, political, cultural and environmental conditions for health to flourish for all, for equity in health between the global south and north, as well as within the social groups of each country. In order to achieve these objectives, the MOH continues to raise the banner of Comprehensive Primary Health Care as proclaimed in Alma-Ata in 1978 and in its charter for the health of the peoples approved in 2000 during its foundation. However, PHC, as proclaimed in Alma-Ata in 1978, has been emptied of its comprehensive and intercultural content towards a neo-selective and biomedical approach in order to make the health systems reforms that drive the Universal Health Coverage policy functional to the private and market interests of health insurance and services.

The Declaration of Alma Ata (1978) established in paragraph 6 that PHC is an integral part of the country's health system, of which it is the central and main function, and of the overall social and economic development of the community. But more importantly, paragraph 3 of the Alma-Ata Declaration of 1978 states that "Economic and social development, based on a New International Economic Order, is of fundamental importance for the full achievement of health for all and for the reduction of the gap between the health status of developing and developed countries.

The promotion and protection of people's health is essential for sustained economic and social development and contributes to a better quality of life and world peace. At this meeting we embrace this declaration and support the peoples, political forces and governments that are once again raising the banners of a new international economic order in tune with the demands of today's world and the expectations of our peoples.

The Regional Committee for the Promotion of Community Health, which was created in 1975, together with its member organizations and the new processes that are joining in action at this

meeting, has been a pioneer in the fight for health in the Mesoamerican and Caribbean region.

We have a long history of historical struggles and resistance of the peoples, with growing social and political movements. We have achieved changes and transformations from some progressive governments and in the Latin American and Caribbean region. The current context tells us that we are in the moment of the mobilization of the peoples, of the formation of governments and territorial and national self-governments for change that lead to strengthen and place in the public and social agenda the campaign for the refoundation and transformation of the health systems promoted by the PHM. We call for the appropriation of the campaign and for it to be an instrument of mobilization, unity and struggle.

The World People's Health Assembly to be held in Cali - Colombia from December 4 to 8, 2023 will be an important space for meeting, exchange of experience, analysis of our realities and policies, construction of alternative proposals and new strategies of struggle that will allow the peoples of the world to strengthen their struggle against this predatory model of health and life. We commit ourselves directly and indirectly to participate in an organized and collective manner in its preparation, development and follow-up.

We reiterate the search for another paradigm in the face of this civilizational crisis, for good living, guided by the ancestral and popular knowledge of the earth, for health systems respectful of the diverse cultures and expressions, with a focus on rights, capable of contributing to the care of peoples and nature, the care of life and health in the territories.

Finally: We repudiate the criminalization and detention of defenders of land and territory in the face of extractive industries in El Salvador: Miguel Ángel Gámez, Alejandro Laínez García and Pedro Antonio Rivas, members of the Santa Marta community, Teodoro Antonio Pacheco, director of ADES, Saúl Agustín Rivas and most recently the detention of Manuel Gámez Morales, son of environmental defender Vidalina Morales.

We demand their prompt release. We also stand in solidarity with our Ecuadorian brothers and sisters, who are at a political crossroads in the executive and legislative branches, but we trust in the history of struggle and permanent demands of the social and indigenous movement for a successful outcome in favor of the people.

Province, Municipality of Santo Domingo Oeste, Dominican Republic, May 18, 2023.