DECLARATION OF PANAMA

WE,

Representatives of the Public Health Associations of the Americas named below, gathered together on July 28, 2016, in Panama City, upon establishing the Alliance of Public Health Associations of the Americas (APHAA) as a regional member of the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA),

DECLARE:

- Our support of the principles, concepts and goals outlined in the resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2015 – Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as in the Rio Political Declaration on Social Determinants of Health (WHO, 2011) and in A Global Charter for the Public’s Health (Charter for the Public’s Health - WFPHA, 2016).

Taken as a whole, these documents put forth and expound the best conceptual traditions of public health worldwide, as well as their successes and shortcomings.

- Where the health of the people of the Americas is concerned, we note that considerable progress has been made in the last two decades, such as reduced infant mortality rates and increased life expectancy at birth. Nevertheless, we live with growing risks of non-communicable diseases, injuries and mental disorders, and infectious diseases continue to pose healthcare challenges for our health systems.

- In relation to various causes of morbidity and mortality, profound inequalities persist among countries and within countries. In Latin America and the Caribbean, although extreme poverty and social inequality have been reduced in recent years, the region remains the planet’s most unequal: in 2014, the wealthiest 19% accumulated 71% of the region’s wealth. Moreover, the resulting social inequalities in health have a particular impact on the descendants of First Nations, Afro-descendants, immigrants, displaced peoples, and other vulnerable groups.

- One of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is specifically to “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages“. Several other SDGs, if not all of them, are closely related to public health, for example: ending poverty in all its forms everywhere; ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture; ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all; achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls; ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all; reducing inequality within and among countries; making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns; and taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- We stand by the findings of the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health: Closing the health gap for the people of the Americas requires improving the circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work and age […] tackling the inequitable distribution of power, money and resources. It is therefore necessary to assess the magnitude of health problems, evaluate interventions, expand the knowledge base, train personnel on the subject of social determinants of health, and promote awareness in terms of public opinion in that regard. Efforts toward strengthening public health systems are essential to ensure universal health coverage.

WE DECLARE

Our commitment to act in co-operation with multilateral, governmental and non-governmental organizations, under the concepts of health as a basic human right and the socio-environmental determinants of health, combining efforts to expand democratic governance, the self-determination of all peoples, respect for human rights, the promotion of the spirit of democracy and the fight against corruption in its various forms.

- Lastly, we salute the efforts to create a culture of peace and co-operation in our region. We commend and support the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba, the announcement of the easing of the economic and financial embargo that affects the well-being of the Cuban people, and the peace process in Colombia.

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