



Citation

**Award of the World Health Organization
Health-for-All Gold Medal
to
His Excellency Dr Fidel Castro
President of the Republic of Cuba**

His Excellency Dr Fidel Castro has always demonstrated a strong commitment to the health sector of his country, and today Cuba has in many ways become a model for other developing countries in respect of its enlightened and progressive health services.

On assuming the leadership of his country in 1959, the President was aware that in a developing country such as Cuba, the key problem in the health sector was neither health nor disease as such, but rather the “social misery” of hunger, ignorance, discrimination and the denial of basic human rights. These led to the “biological misery” of poor health.

Trained in law, the President has on numerous occasions displayed his considerable knowledge and understanding of health. The series of International Seminars on Primary Health Care, held in Cuba between 1986 and 1993 were organized with the personal involvement of the President, and reflect his continuing commitment to the ideas that emerged from the historic 1978 International Conference on Primary Health Care, held in Alma-Ata under the joint auspices of WHO and UNICEF. In spite of his numerous other responsibilities, the President delivered important and innovative addresses at several of these Seminars.

But it is at the national and district levels that the President has devoted the bulk of his efforts for health, which he has rightly perceived as critically important for overall sustainable development. The country’s national health system, with its emphasis on primary health care managed by a “health team”, is widely considered to be exemplary. Few developing countries have adopted such a comprehensive range of health policies, geared to priority needs and the capacity of health workers to meet them, on behalf of all Cuban people, particularly the most vulnerable and impoverished. It is anticipated that by the year 2000, a network of some 20 000 family physicians will be in place in Cuba, providing comprehensive medical care to the entire population, through a family-based approach. Clearly, the spirit of Alma-Ata, and of health for all, is alive and well in Cuba, thanks in no small measure to the leadership of its distinguished President.

It is in recognition of this leadership, and this continuing commitment to the social goal of health for all, that the World Health Organization is privileged to present the Health-for-All Gold Medal to His Excellency Dr Fidel Castro, President of the Republic of Cuba.

Hiroshi Nakajima, M.D., Ph.D.
Director-General
World Health Organization
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