

Excellencies, Ministers

As we gather here at the 76th World Health Assembly, I bring greetings from the beautiful country of Belize, located in the Central American and Caribbean region. Our region faces unique health challenges, compounded by poverty, inequity, and limited resources.

However, we are committed to the theme of this year's assembly - "Saving Lives, driving health for all." Belize recognizes that health is a human right, and we are committed to ensuring that all our citizens have access to quality health services, by breaking down barriers.

Challenges such as human resource for health, increase in Non-Communicable Diseases, difficulties obtaining and vital medication and vaccines along with the many detrimental effects of global warming, all continue to plague our region.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of investing in public health and building strong health systems. Belize has taken bold steps to tackle the pandemic, by implementing aggressive public health measures, investing in testing and contact tracing, and securing vaccines for our population. We are proud to have one of the highest vaccination rates in the region, with over 55% of our population vaccinated.

Belize has made great strides over the last year as we move forward towards the certification of being malaria free, and toward achieving the elimination of mother to child transmission of HIV and Syphilis. Both areas are in the process of certification by WHO and these achievements have resulted from the hard work and dedication of our staff. Belize has worked tirelessly to improve nutrition in schools at all levels. With strong political will, and working with partners, our nutrition policy has been launched. This incorporates promoting healthy foods in school, along with a ban on sugary sweeteners beverages at all levels of education. Belize has also signed on to the HEARTS initiative to ensure better management of NCDS.

Mental Health challenges have increased globally. Our health care workers are better equipped to identify and manage mental health illnesses, through widespread Mh-Gap training expanding to all cadre of health staff and including Police Officers.

Climate change and its effects have significantly affected our region, with Belize still feeling the effects of Hurricane Lisa which occurred Nov 2022. Building resilient and SMART facilities for a sustainable health system remains one of our priorities. Over the last two years, many of our health infrastructures have been upgraded, this solidifies our commitment to a stronger, sustainable health system.

Belize recognizes the importance of technical cooperation in improving health outcomes.

We are committed to continue to work with partners like PAHO.

We are committed to continue to improve, expand, educate, launch.

We are committed to continue to work toward better access to care for our people with the aim of Achieving Universal Health Coverage for Belize.

In conclusion, Belize reaffirms its commitment to saving lives and driving health for all.

We call on all member states to prioritize health as a fundamental human right and to work together to build a healthier, more equitable, and more sustainable world.

Belize also reiterates its unequivocal support to Taiwan involvement in all WHO events.