

» 69th World Health Assembly: the challenge of global and sustainable solutions

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In health terms, the global scenario presented at the World Health Organization's recent assembly shows profound differences. The extremes of life and income present the most pronounced challenges, which were not on the agenda just a few decades ago.

On one side, the **aging trend** in developed countries poses a series of unprecedented challenges in the history of mankind. Up till now, senility only afflicted a minority proportion of society. However, according to the forecasts, the proportion of the global population who is 60 years and older will double between 2000 and 2050, reaching 22 percent. Closely tied to this problem is the growing shortage of health personnel. It is estimated that before 2030, 40 million job openings will be created in this sector, the majority of which will be in medium and high-income countries, whereas in low and medium-low income countries there will be a shortage of 18 million people dedicated to health care. This threat also represents an opportunity: it is becoming clearer that one of the activities that will offer greater employment opportunities is health care and personalized care specifically, a function that is unlikely to be replaced by computers or robots. Because of its population pyramid, Mexico is specially prepared to address this issue, as long as the education system focuses on it.

On the other side, childhood obesity has become one of the greatest global health emergencies, primarily due to its long-term effect on the proliferation of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). Similar to aging, childhood obesity is a problem never before experienced by mankind, therefore there are no precedents or success stories to refer to. That is why WHO uses a cautious language in referring to "the focus and combinations of interventions that are probably more efficient in combating childhood and adolescent obesity in different global contexts." In this field

is where all the work lies, because although WHO and governmental institutions in many countries have taken radical restrictive measures against advertising, labeling and consumption of certain products, the time elapsed has been too short to observe the generational effects of these measures in children, while the adverse economic effects have already been experienced by the industries in question. Overall, WHO maintains a prohibitionist attitude, in this assembly against infant formulas in particular, recommending member countries to severely toughen restrictions from 0-6 months to 36 months of age.

Another issue that highlights the health differences between developed and undeveloped countries is the **migratory crisis** that stems from the different political conflicts and economic emergencies in several countries. On one hand, the migrating condition usually ends in hunger, weakness and the spread of infectious diseases, along with the risks associated with transit under precarious conditions (shipwrecks, murders, accidents); on the other hand, it puts an unusual pressure on the health systems in recipient countries, which in many cases already find themselves at the limit of their capabilities (e.g. Greece).

To address these situations, the assembly decided to undertake one of the most profound transformations in the history of the organization: the establishment of a new Health Emergency Program. The new program is set to provide rapid, predictable and comprehensive aid to countries and communities in an effort to prepare and respond to all types of emergencies related to human health - whether they be outbreaks, natural disasters or emergencies caused by humans or by some type of conflict - as well as to recover from those emergencies.

WHO will exercise its leadership in the largest humanitarian emergencies and disasters management system. As the lead agency in the Health Action Group, it will make use of the capabilities and expertise of a wide range of associates and member states. To fulfill these new responsibilities, the delegates have agreed to a budget of \$494 million for the program during the biennium 2016-2017. They have asked WHO's director general to inform the 70th World Health Assembly about the progress made in the establishment and launch of the program.

In summary, the world faces unprecedented situations that require global and innovative solutions. It is regrettable that productive companies are excluded from WHO's discussions and are practically barred from any contact with the delegates throughout the duration of the assembly. The productive sector needs to articulate new alliances that will allow it to influence the global health discussion more effectively and convey the message of its knowledge, experience, innovation capability, social responsibility and interest in consumers' health. These are resources that the world cannot and should not waste in its search for a healthier and more sustainable world.





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