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REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE
AMERICAS

News release

Dr. Sealey-Thomas, of Antigua and Barbuda is sworn in as PAHO/WHO Assistant Director



Washington, DC, 12 October, 2023 (PAHO) – Dr. Rhonda Sealey-Thomas, a citizen of Antigua and Barbuda, was sworn in today as the new Assistant Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization (WHO).

Dr. Sealey-Thomas holds a Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery degree, as well as a Master of Public Health and a Doctorate in Public Health from the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica. She has worked for the Ministry of Health in Antigua and Barbuda for over 25 years, most recently serving as Chief Medical Officer from 2005-2023.

In her new post, Dr. Sealey-Thomas is part of PAHO's Executive Management team, along with PAHO Director, Dr. Jarbas Barbosa, Deputy Director, Ms. Mary-Lou Valdez, and Director of Administration, Mrs. Kristan Beck.

"Dr. Sealey-Thomas knows, understands and shares the values and the mission of this great organization. Indeed, the work of her whole life reflects these values of equity, excellence, solidarity, respect and integrity," PAHO Director, Dr. Jarbas Barbosa, said. "The Organization is quite fortunate to have her at this crucial time."

During the ceremony, the new Assistant-Director highlighted the primary health challenges the Region of the Americas must face over the next few years, including non-communicable diseases, climate change, the ability to have resilient systems and the urgent need to strengthen pandemic preparedness and response. Dr. Sealey-Thomas expressed her commitment to work with Dr. Barbosa to support his vision for the future of PAHO and for the Region of the Americas.

"There is a wealth of knowledge, skilled personnel, learning institutions and other entities that bind us together," she said. "It is my aspiration that during my tenure we work even closer as a Region in line with PAHO's value of solidarity."

Also speaking at the ceremony, Minister of Health, Wellness & the Environment of Antigua and Barbuda, Honorable. Sir Molwyn Joseph, underscored the "pivotal role" PAHO has played and "must continue to play" in the Region, and welcomed Dr. Sealey-Thomas' appointment "because of our deep knowledge of her capacity to perform successfully and every confidence in her ability to strengthen the PAHO team."

Dr. Sealey-Thomas oversees the departments of Communicable Diseases, Prevention, Control and Elimination; Social and Environmental Determinants for Health Equity; Evidence and Intelligence for Action in Health; Health Systems and Services; Innovation, Access to Medicines and Health Technologies; and Noncommunicable Diseases Prevention and Mental Health; as well as the Special Programs on Comprehensive Immunization and the Regional Revolving Funds.

In addition, three PAHO/WHO technical centers are under Dr. Sealey-Thomas' responsibility: the Pan American Center for Foot-and-Mouth Disease and Veterinary Public Health (PANAFTOSA); the Latin American Center for Perinatology, Women and Reproductive Health (CLAP); and the Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information (BIREME).

"Please be assured that I embark on this journey with humility, determination and compassion," Dr. Sealey-Thomas concluded. "Let us all remember that our collective

efforts are the driving force behind building healthier, more resilient, and more equitable societies throughout the Americas.

Biography

Dr. Sealey-Thomas started her career as a Medical Officer for the Ministry of Health in Antigua and Barbuda in 1994. She then served as the country's Chief Medical Officer from 2005-2023, where she acted as the primary advisor on most pertinent health issues.

Dr. Sealey-Thomas began her collaboration with PAHO in 2004 as Associate Consultant in the Non-communicable Diseases Unit, where she helped shape the Organization's approach to regional challenges such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease and cancer.

She was a member of PAHO's working group in charge of crafting a Health Agenda for the Americas during 2005-2006, a member of the Organization's advisory group on the Noncommunicable Disease Agenda in the Caribbean and was also Chair of the Regional Validation Committee for the Elimination of the Mother to Child Transmission of HIV and Congenital Syphilis.

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The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) works with the countries of the Americas to improve the health and quality of life of its population. Founded in 1902, it is the world's oldest international public health agency. It serves as the Regional Office of WHO for the Americas and is the specialized health agency of the Inter-American system.