

Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten are admitted as new PAHO Associate Members

Washington, D.C., 17 September 2012 (PAHO/WHO) – Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten were admitted as new Associate Members of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) during the 28th Pan American Sanitary Conference, which began today at PAHO headquarters in Washington, D.C.

This category of membership will enable the three countries to participate directly in PAHO activities. As PAHO Associate Members, they will have the right to participate in Governing Bodies meetings, albeit with no vote; to participate with voice and vote in technical commissions or committees; to have access to all technical cooperation services of PAHO; and to receive information and documentation produced or distributed by PAHO.

"We are very proud that, even at this late stage, our Organization continues to grow," said Mirta Roses Periago, PAHO's Director.

The request for admission was presented on 15 August 2012 by the Kingdom of the Netherlands as a PAHO Participating State and responsible for the three islands' foreign affairs. PAHO's Director submitted this request for consideration by the other countries. Upon admission, the governments of Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten will be subject to the obligations and rights set out in PAHO's rules and regulations, which include the obligation to pay a financial contribution directly to the Organization.

Richard Visser, Minister of Health and Sport of Aruba, said membership in PAHO marked "a new beginning for Aruba" and reflected the "need for closer relations with the countries of the Caribbean" to face common health problems, such as noncommunicable diseases. Minister of Health of Curaçao, Jacinta Scoop, and Minister of Health of Sint Maarten Cornelius de Weever both thanked PAHO Member States for admitting their countries.

In October 2010, following a process of constitutional reform, the Netherland Antilles was dissolved as a constituent country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Since this date, the Kingdom comprises four countries: the Netherlands (including the islands of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, and Saba), Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten. Following this process, the countries of Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten each requested the status of Associate Member. The Associate Member category was established in 1992 for the admission of "territories or groups of territories in the Western Hemisphere whose international relations are the responsibility of States whose seats of government are in or outside the Region." Puerto Rico became the first PAHO Associate Member and this year is celebrating its 20th anniversary of incorporation.

Puerto Rico's delegate to PAHO, Raúl Castellanos, said the admission of Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten as Associate Members of PAHO "expands and strengthens Pan-Americanism."

The Kingdom of the Netherlands became a PAHO Participating State in 1951 in representation of its constituent countries in the Americas at that time (Aruba and the Netherland Antilles). The same year, France and the United Kingdom became Participating States through their territories in the Americas.

The PAHO Constitution stipulates that territories or groups of territories within the Western Hemisphere that are not responsible for the conduct of their international affairs "shall have the right to be represented in the Organization."