

## **Key officials highlighted the importance of women's leadership in the region's health**

- The high-level event "Women's Leadership in the Regional Health and Resilience Agenda" featured the participation of prominent authorities and representatives in the health sector.

Washington D.C., March 8, 2024 - On the occasion of International Women's Day, the high-level event organized by the Inter-American Task Force on women's leadership in partnership with the Government of Canada, placed on the agenda the importance of more women leading the region's health, highlighting best practices on the transformative role they play in the sector despite the multiple challenges they face to assume leadership roles.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, half of the doctors and over 80% of nursing staff are women (IDB, 2019), a key workforce in healthcare. However, women only hold between 8 and 25% of leadership positions in hospital institutions (Boston Consulting Group, 2019 - UNDP, 2018). Likewise, only one in five health ministries in the region is led by a woman. Overall, women participate less in health decision-making, which obscures their specific needs and those of the people under their care.

In this context, the event "Women's Leadership in the Regional Health and Resilience Agenda" featured the participation of key authorities from the States, international and inter-American organizations, and civil society organizations. The conversation focused on the critical contribution of women to achieving the health goals proposed for the region within the framework of the Inter-American Plan of Action on Health and Resilience adopted by the States at the Ninth Summit of the Americas.

"We cannot remain at the base of the pyramid when we can share decision-making positions with men. Women need to be present so that our agenda becomes visible," emphasized Alejandra Mora Mora, Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM/OAS), reminding that 73% of health personnel in the region are women.

On his part, the Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Jarbas Barbosa, called for supporting women's leadership while strengthening the health workforce after the pandemic: "We cannot achieve universal health or reach the Sustainable Development Goals without gender equality in the health sector," he stated.

Additionally, Waleska López Canú, Medical Director of the Wuqu'Kawoq Health Alliance, emphasized the particular challenges faced by indigenous women: "It is very difficult for indigenous women to access quality training and opportunities in health issues. We have much to contribute if our voices are heard," she highlighted.

The participating authorities and organizations reaffirmed the importance of women's full and equal participation and decision-making in the health sector to democratic health systems governance and equitable outcomes for all. They thus agreed to continue joining efforts to eliminate barriers by promoting women's retention and access to leadership positions and addressing gender inequality in the health workforce.

**About the Task Force:**

The Inter-American Task Force on Women's Leadership is a platform composed of twelve international organizations committed to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment through increased cooperation and synergies among institutions. The Task Force comprises: CIM/OAS, IACHR, ECLAC, PAHO/WHO, ParIAmericas, UNDP, UN Women, CAF-Latin American Development Bank, the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB), International IDEA, CIWiL, and CLADEM.