

**Greeting Sent by the Honorable Mike Leavitt  
Secretary of Health and Human Services  
Meeting of the World Congress on Public Health  
August 2006**

Greetings to all attending the 8th Brazilian Congress of Collective Health and the 11<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Public Health in Rio.

For the United States and every nation represented here today, there is no more important issue than public health.

Public health challenges often transcend geographic barriers. So do environmental challenges. These are challenges being met head on by an exciting new system that you will hear about during this session.

It is a dynamic new network, an international cooperative effort designed to gather information that will improve the public health of people all across the globe.

It will assist in managing watersheds and drinking water. It will aid in monitoring disease outbreaks, and it will help to keep track of other basic needs like food, transportation and housing. It is my hope that GEOSS, as this new Global Earth Observation System of Systems is called, may one day help in the detection of emerging diseases.

In just three years, this exciting endeavor has gained the support of 65 countries, the European Commission and 43 international organizations. It has come far in a very short time.

I hope you will work with us to learn how to make the best possible use of GEOSS when you return to your home countries.

Thank you -- and have a wonderful week.

Secretary Mike Leavitt  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services