

Report of the Regional Committee of WHO for the Americas to the Executive Board

30th Pan American Sanitary Conference of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), 74th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Americas (Washington, D.C., United States of America, 26 to 30 September 2022)

Summary report by the President (Mr. Michael Pearson, Branch Head, Office of International Affairs for the Health Portfolio, Public Health Agency of Canada)¹

PART 1: TOPICS FOR GLOBAL DISCUSSION

WHO Proposed programme budget 2024–2025²

The Regional Committee for the Americas welcomed the increased focus on prioritization in the development of the WHO programme budget for 2024–2025 and emphasized the need for Member States to understand how country- and regional-level prioritization drives budget allocations. The need for clarity with regard to the distribution and use of the agreed increases in WHO assessed contributions was underscored. Member States stressed that the Region of the Americas should be apportioned an equitable share of any such increases and called on the WHO Secretariat to commit to ensuring that the Region receives the entirety of its allocation. The importance of accountability, compliance and risk management was highlighted. It was considered crucial for those areas, and other aspects of governance strengthening, to remain priorities at all three levels of the Organization. While the Regional Committee recognized the value of focusing on areas where the most progress can be made in terms of potential health gains, it emphasized that the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized populations must not be neglected.

Strengthening the global architecture for health emergency preparedness, response and resilience

During the discussion on implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHRs) at the Regional Committee for the Americas, it was emphasized that the Working Group and the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body responsible to draft and negotiate a WHO convention, agreement, or other international instrument on pandemic prevention,

¹ The full report of the session (Document CSP30/FR) and all documents, resolutions and decisions of the session mentioned in this report are available at:

<https://www.paho.org/en/governing-bodies/pan-american-sanitary-conference/30th-pan-american-sanitary-conference>

² [Document CSP30/INF/3](#).

preparedness, and response should work simultaneously, and in an inclusive, collaborative and transparent manner, to avoid duplication and errors and align work plans and timelines. The need for a stronger, more coherent, inclusive, and equitable global health architecture was underscored.

The Regional Committee for the Americas approved the Strategy on Regional Genomic Surveillance for Epidemic and Pandemic Preparedness and Response³ aimed at strengthening Member States' capacity for genomic surveillance to enable a timelier response to disease outbreaks and epidemics. The Regional Committee supported the multisectoral "One Health" approach put forward in the strategy and highlighted the need for coordination among human, animal, and environmental health surveillance institutions.

Consultations on the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body

A regional consultation on the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) was held during the week of the Regional Committee for the Americas. During the consultation Member States were provided with an update on the INB process and were asked for their inputs on the working draft. A summary report on the discussion is being prepared for use during the third meeting of the INB scheduled for 5-7 December 2022, and as input for the Bureau of the INB for the development of the conceptual zero draft.

Standing Committee on Health Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response

Although, the Regional Committee for the Americas did not specifically discuss the Standing Committee on Health Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response, the Committee stressed the importance of continued participation by the Member States of the Region in all the global discussions under way. It was considered essential to ensure that the views of all Member States were represented, including those that are not members of or in a leadership position on any of the global negotiating or governance bodies.

PART 2: TOPICS OF REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Election of the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau and Nomination of the Regional Director of the World Health Organization for the Americas⁴

The Regional Committee for the Americas elected Dr. Jarbas Barbosa da Silva, Jr., as Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau for a period of five years, beginning on 1 February 2023 and ending on 31 January 2028. The Regional Committee agreed to submit Dr Barbosa da Silva's name to the Executive Board for appointment as Regional Director of the World Health Organization for the Americas for the same period. The Regional Committee also designated the outgoing Director, Dr. Carissa F. Etienne, Director Emeritus of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau as of the date of her retirement.

³ [Document CSP30/12](#) and [resolution CSP30.R9](#).

⁴ [Document CSP30/4](#) and resolutions [CSP30.R7](#) and [CSP30.R8](#).

Proposed Amendments to the Program Budget of the Pan American Health Organization 2022–2023⁵

The Regional Committee for the Americas approved several amendments to the PAHO Program Budget for 2022–2023, which were made in the light of the approval by the Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly of the increase in the programme budget of WHO for 2022–2023. The Regional Committee encouraged PAHO Member States to continue advocating for an equitable share of WHO resources and for WHO to fully fund the budget space allocated to the Region of the Americas.

Report of the end-of-biennium assessment of the PAHO programme budget 2020–2021/First interim report on the implementation of the PAHO Strategic Plan 2020–2025⁶

The Regional Committee for the Americas viewed the end-of-biennium assessment as an opportunity to take stock collectively of the impact that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has had on progress towards the objectives of the PAHO Strategic Plan 2020–2025⁷ and to identify challenges, lessons learned and areas for improvement. The assessment was also seen as a key tool for accountability and transparency. The Committee highlighted the need for solidarity, strong political commitment and increased investment in health in order to regain the ground lost as a result of the pandemic and reduce inequities in health.

Policy for Recovering Progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals with Equity through Action on the Social Determinants of Health and Intersectoral Work⁸

The Regional Committee for the Americas approved a policy aimed at getting the Region back on track to achieve the health-related Sustainable Development Goals by addressing social determinants of health, with a focus on equity. The policy takes account of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the achievement of the Goals and is linked to the World Health Assembly resolution on reducing health inequities through action on the social determinants of health (resolution WHA62.14). The Committee stressed the need for an intersectoral, health-in-all-policies approach.

Policy for Improving Mental Health⁹

The Regional Committee for the Americas approved a policy for providing Member States with strategic and technical guidance on the successful development and implementation of strategies and initiatives to strengthen mental health care and improve mental health. The policy is aligned with the WHO Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2030 and Executive Board decision EB148(3), on promoting mental health

⁵ [Document CSP30/6](#) and [resolution CSP30.R1](#).

⁶ [Document CSP30/7](#).

⁷ [Official document 359](#).

⁸ [Document CSP30/8](#) and [resolution CSP30/R2](#).

⁹ [Document CSP30/9](#) and [resolution CSP30.R3](#).

preparedness and response for public health emergencies. It recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased mental health problems and disrupted the delivery of mental health services. The Committee underscored the need to prioritize community-based approaches.

Policy on Integrated Care for Improved Health Outcomes¹⁰

The Regional Committee for the Americas approved a policy aimed at addressing fragmentation in health service delivery and improving care through better coordination of providers and services in order to achieve better health outcomes. The policy also addresses the need to strengthen the capacity of health systems to respond to health emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, while also continuing to ensure the delivery of other essential health services. The Committee emphasized the importance of investing in primary health care as a basis for building an integrated health care system and achieving universal health coverage.

Policy to Strengthen National Regulatory Systems for Medicines and Other Health Technologies¹¹

The Regional Committee for the Americas approved a policy for strengthening regulatory systems for medicines and other health technologies through four strategic lines of action. The fourth line – adopt new evaluation systems based on the WHO Global Benchmarking Tool and related mechanisms – aims to support the transition of national regulatory authorities from regional reference authorities to global recognition as WHO-listed authorities. The Committee highlighted the importance of enhancing regulatory harmonization and convergence and strengthening regulatory systems as part of efforts to ensure regional self-sufficiency in the production of vaccines and medicines and prevent the distribution of substandard products.

Keeping the Region of the Americas free of polio¹²

Following the confirmation, for the first time in 30 years, of a case of poliomyelitis in one country of the Region, the Regional Committee for the Americas adopted a resolution calling for action to address the decline in polio vaccination coverage and surveillance and prevent further poliovirus transmission. The Committee stressed the need to boost vaccination coverage not only for poliomyelitis but for all vaccine-preventable diseases.

Update on the COVID-19 pandemic in the Region of the Americas¹³

The Regional Committee acknowledged that, despite recent decreases in cases, COVID-19 poses an ongoing threat in the Region, particularly as vaccination coverage in some countries remains low. Member States noted that lack of vaccines and other critical health supplies, coupled with heavy dependence on imported products, had been a major

¹⁰ [Document CSP30/10](#) and [resolution CSP30.R4](#).

¹¹ [Document CSP30/11](#) and [resolution CSP30.R12](#).

¹² [Document CSP30/19, Rev. 1](#), and [resolution CSP30.R13](#).

¹³ [Document CSP30/INF/1, Rev. 1](#).

challenge during the pandemic, and underlined the need to boost regional capacity for the production of vaccines, medicines and other health technologies.

Report on strategic issues between PAHO and WHO¹⁴

The Regional Committee for the Americas examined a report on issues of strategic importance to the relationship between PAHO and WHO. The Committee welcomed the ongoing work to improve WHO governance, accountability and transparency. The agile Member State task group on strengthening WHO budgetary, programmatic and financing governance was seen as an opportunity for the Region to contribute to a stronger WHO. The extension of the Thirteenth Programme of Work of WHO will be the objective of a specific consultation to be held on 17 October 2022.

Implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005)¹⁵

The Regional Committee for the Americas reviewed a report on the implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHRs) in the Americas. Inconsistent and inadequate implementation of the Regulations was identified as a major issue. Strong support was expressed for the consideration of targeted amendments to the Regulations. It was emphasized that, while the discussions on potential amendments are ongoing, sustained efforts to strengthen IHR core capacities and implement the existing Regulations must continue.

Special session of the Directing Council of PAHO, Regional Committee of WHO for the Americas¹⁶

A special session of the Regional Committee of the Americas was held on 5 August 2022, to consider a proposal¹⁷ regarding procurement of the monkeypox vaccine through the PAHO Revolving Fund for Access to Vaccines. The Council was informed that the lone producer of the vaccine had not agreed to the single lowest price terms of the Revolving Fund. The Council adopted a resolution¹⁸ authorizing the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau to conduct extraordinary negotiations with manufacturers for the best possible price for procurement of the monkeypox vaccine for the Region of the Americas and, if necessary, as an exceptional measure, to adjust the terms and conditions of the Revolving Fund in order to secure a supply of monkeypox vaccines.

¹⁴ [Document CSP30/INF/2.](#)

¹⁵ [Document CSP30/INF/4.](#)

¹⁶ The final report of the session is available at: <https://www.paho.org/en/governing-bodies/directing-council/special-session-directing-council>

¹⁷ [Document CDSS2/2.](#)

¹⁸ [Resolution CDSS2.R1.](#)