

*executive committee of
the directing council*



**PAN AMERICAN
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION**

*working party of
the regional committee*



**WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION**

113th Meeting
Washington, D.C.
27 June-1 July 1994

Item 4.4 of the provisional agenda

CE113/12 (Eng.)
24 May 1994
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

**PROPOSAL FOR CONVENING A PAN AMERICAN CONFERENCE ON HEALTH AND
THE ENVIRONMENT IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TO BE HELD IN 1995**

In 1992, the XXXVI Meeting of the Directing Council of the Pan American Health Organization examined the Report on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and Its Significance for the Work of the Pan American Health Organization, presented by the Secretariat. The Meeting adopted Resolution XIII, which urges the Member Governments to strengthen the technical, administrative, and managerial capabilities of national and local institutions responsible for the management of environmental health. This strengthening is to be accomplished principally through: preparation of sectoral analyses; formulation of comprehensive sectoral policies; and formulation of plans and coordination of their implementation. The Resolution also asks that each country promote the establishment and/or strengthening of a high-level commission to coordinate activities aimed at ensuring the effectiveness of actions related to health and environment.

In addition, the Resolution requests the Director to provide support to the countries in the process of formulating policies, regulations, and plans related to health, environment, and development, with a view to supporting actions in health protection and promotion. Among other requests, it is suggested that a study be made of the desirability and feasibility of convening a Pan American Conference on Health, Environment, and Development. This event would bring together representatives from the highest levels of the health, public works, and environmental sectors in the Region and provide them with a forum to analyze common problems, framework, and actions. The Director was requested to present a recommendation to the 111th Meeting of the Executive Committee in June 1993.

In response to this request, the Organization initiated collaborative activities with the governments, and the Secretariat presented to the 111th Meeting of the Executive Committee a proposal for a Pan American Conference on Health, Environment, and Development to be carried out in 1994 (Document CE111/10, May 1993). After analyzing the proposal, the Executive Committee decided that the Conference could provide a vehicle for achieving the integration of all the sectors that, in one way or another, must play a role in any discussion of health and the environment in development. But it also judged that a longer period of preparation would be needed and recommended that the Conference be postponed until 1995. This postponement would also permit careful study of the discussions of the Commission on Sustainable Development of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, to be carried out in May 1994.

The present document outlines actions and processes related to health and the environment that are under way as part of the follow-up to the Rio Conference, and describes the Organization's cooperation with the Member States in this area. A plan is proposed for the development of a Pan American Conference on Health and the Environment in Sustainable Development, including a preliminary conference agenda.

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1. Introduction

Environmental problems and their relation to development have been discussed in innumerable forums at different levels over the last two decades. Attention has focused as well on the importance of the relationship between human beings and the environment. In 1972 the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment affirmed that people have the fundamental right to freedom, equality, and decent living conditions in an environment that allows life to be lived with dignity and well-being. The 1972 Conference thus already highlighted the importance of rational management of the relationship between humans and the environment, describing it as essential if humankind is to survive and improve its well-being. Despite these recommendations made in 1972, however, in 1992 the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) warned that although progress had been made, mainly in terms of understanding more clearly the implications of environmental problems, many problems had grown worse in the intervening 20 years. Moreover, UNCED considered it highly likely that existing and potential problems will become even more serious if the necessary measures are not taken to address them.

A special feature of UNCED was its emphasis on the critical role of health and the environment in the attainment of well-being. The Conference stated unequivocally that the prospects for survival of the species depend on measures by humans to develop the social and economic environment in an appropriate and sustainable manner. It was made clear, moreover, that human health cannot be considered apart from the myriad of environmental factors that affect it, among them chemical substances, water and air pollution, contamination of food, poverty, urbanization, the proliferation of disease vectors, underdevelopment, technology, trade, and others.

"Agenda 21" of UNCED details the actions that will be needed in order to achieve sustainable development. This plan of action has important implications for the health agencies, both national and international; it requires the health sector and other sectors to broaden their vision of health, the environment, and development, to reorder their priorities, and to base their programs and activities on a holistic approach that addresses the total problem. The Report on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and Its Significance for the Work of the Pan American Health Organization, Document CD36/22, 17 August 1992 (Annex 1) analyzes the implications of Agenda 21, and concludes that agencies both within and outside the health sector will need to develop new attitudes and new ways of thinking and acting that are sensitive to existing and potential problems. In order to attain the objectives of Agenda 21, health professionals should work jointly with other social and economic sectors to determine the best path to follow, seeking innovative ways of meeting the present and future needs of humankind; in this way the proposed solutions can be understood,

accepted, integrated into the national processes, and implemented by all sectors that are directly and indirectly responsible for health, the environment, and development.

From the point of view of the health sector the proposals being set forth are not necessarily new. Many of them have been discussed and included in resolutions of the Governing Bodies of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). However, their application and results have been limited, particularly in terms of cooperation with other sectors; this is due not only to the health sector's lack of capacity to promote them but also to the lack of intersectoral forums where the measures could be discussed and incorporated by the other sectors. The Agenda 21 proposals offer an opportunity to begin mobilizing the necessary cooperation. Within the framework of this program, the challenge for the health sector is to ensure that considerations of health and environmental health are incorporated adequately into the national plans and programs for sustainable development that the countries will prepare in accordance with paragraph 38.8 of Agenda 21.

2. Health in the Follow-up of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

UNCED's Agenda 21 asks organizations of the United Nations system to incorporate the Agenda 21 recommendations into their activities. In response, United Nations organizations as well as bilateral and nongovernmental agencies are carrying out actions toward this end. With regard to health and the environment the recommendations have been implemented in some cases. In many other instances, however, they are absent, owing largely to the lack of the integrated approaches required.

2.1 *At the Global Level*

2.1.1 *The Commission on Sustainable Development*

UNCED, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 3 to 14 June 1992, marked the beginning of a major new phase of international cooperation and development in managing the environment, based on recognition of the need to take a comprehensive approach to problems concerning the environment and development. Among other recommendations, the Conference in paragraph 38.11 of Agenda 21 called for a high-level Commission on Sustainable Development to be established in accordance with article 68 of the United Nations Charter. This Commission would report to the Economic and Social Council and, through it, to the United Nations General Assembly. In its resolution 47/191, Institutional Arrangements to Follow-up the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the General Assembly endorsed this recommendation. The Economic and Social Council therefore established the Commission, giving it responsibility for, inter alia, monitoring the progress made in

implementing Agenda 21 as well as the activities related to integrating the goals on environment and development into the United Nations system. The Commission was established with 53 Member States, including Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, the United States of America, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

The Commission's work includes the analysis over several years of progress made in implementing the following sectoral groups:

- 1994: health (Chapter 6), human settlements (Chapter 7), and fresh water (Chapter 18); toxic chemicals (Chapter 19), solid wastes (Chapter 21), and hazardous wastes (Chapters 20 and 22);
- 1995: land, desertification, forests, and biodiversity;
- 1996: atmosphere, oceans, and all kinds of seas.

In keeping with the request by the Chair of the Commission on Sustainable Development, WHO has primary responsibility for preparing the report on progress in implementing the health-related components of the first sectoral group of Agenda 21, to be presented to the Commission on Sustainable Development in May 1994. WHO/Geneva is currently in the process of preparing this report in collaboration with various international organizations, United Nations programs, and the WHO regional offices.

2.1.2 *WHO Global Strategy for Health and Environment*

In May 1992, the World Health Assembly (Resolution WHA45.31) requested the Director-General of WHO to formulate a new global WHO strategy for environmental health based on the findings and recommendations of the WHO Commission on Health and Environment and on the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. In May 1993 the 46th World Health Assembly adopted the WHO Global Strategy for Health and Environment, Document WHO/EHE/93.2, with Resolution WHA46.20 (Annex 2).

The Resolution endorses the proposed strategy and calls upon the Member States: 1) to give high priority to matters relating to health and the environment in the development of plans on sustainable development at the country level, in line with paragraph 38.8 of Agenda 21, and to utilize the WHO global strategy as the framework for the environmental health aspects of these plans; 2) to collaborate with WHO in order to strengthen their own capacities in matters related to health and the environment for the attainment of environmentally sound and sustainable development; 3) to allocate adequate

resources to implement the WHO global strategy at the country level; 4) to establish appropriate coordinating mechanisms to ensure collaboration among the authorities in all sectors having responsibilities for health and the environment, including nongovernmental organizations.

The Resolution also appeals to multilateral and bilateral funding organizations to support the WHO global strategy and to give high priority to programs and projects on health and the environment in financing sustainable development.

The Resolution requests the WHO regional committees to use the global strategy in developing corresponding regional strategies and action plans.

In addition, it asks the Director-General of WHO, among other actions, to support the Member States in ensuring that measures for health and the environment are fully incorporated into plans and activities for sustainable development.

In accordance with the new WHO Global Strategy for Health and Environment, the Ninth General Program of Work of the World Health Organization (1996-2001) maintains "health for all by the year 2000" as a frame of reference for the Organization's actions, and it sets goals that are congruent with those already established in other forums and by other agencies, such as the United Nations World Summit for Children and UNCED. Their goals are reflected in the Ninth General Program of Work as part of the basis for joint action policies on global health.

As the minimum to be achieved by the end of the century, the following four interrelated policy directions are identified:

- integrating health and human development in public policies;
- ensuring equitable access to the health services;
- promoting and protecting health;
- preventing and controlling specific health problems.

In light of these policy orientations, the objectives of the Organization include, *inter alia*, to permit universal access to safe and healthy environments and living conditions, with the following targets:

- the percentage of the population with safe water in the home or with reasonable access will be at least 85 %;

- the percentage of the population with access to safe waste disposal will be at least 75%;
- mortality due to instability and situations of violence will be reduced by 15%.

2.1.3 *Capacity 21*

In Agenda 21, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development urges the Member States to develop and implement their own plans for sustainable development. However, each country's ability to proceed along the path of sustainable development is determined by the capacities of its people and institutions. One of the principal limitations identified in the developing countries is the lack of appropriate endogenous capacities. At UNCED several countries requested that programs be prepared to help them build those institutions and infrastructures, train their human resources, and facilitate the participation of all individuals involved in decision-making. In response to this concern, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) launched Capacity 21, an interagency project designed to support the developing countries in formulating goals, plans, and programs geared toward development that is economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable, and to increase the capacity of these countries to continue formulating and implementing their own policies for sustainable development. The program's central aim is to build capacity to improve the environment and preserve natural resources in the context of economic and social development, processes which implicitly include health concerns.

An important factor in a country's progress toward sustainable development is its ability to care for health and the environment. This depends in part on having the necessary infrastructure to improve environmental conditions that influence the health of the population: for example, water supply and sanitation, control of infectious diseases, protection of vulnerable groups, as well as the protection of human health from the adverse effects of development.

Under Capacity 21, WHO in a joint effort with UNDP has launched specific initiatives in eight countries designed to develop the chapter on health and the environment in each country's national plan for sustainable development. These initiatives, carried out by national authorities in close collaboration with PAHO and the UNDP country offices, are mobilizing the health sector and raising the awareness of agencies related to environment and development (such as housing, public works, local authorities, agriculture, and industry). Although the types of problems, responsibilities and interests vary considerably from country to country, all have basic needs related to health and the environment that must be served. In response to these needs, a common strategy has been established with the following objectives and expected results:

- To increase the participation of the health and environmental sectors in national planning for sustainable development.
- To provide input from the health and environmental sectors into national plans for sustainable development, including the identification of needs for capacity-building in the area of health and the environment.
- To evaluate the extent to which concerns related to health and the environment have been incorporated into national plans for sustainable development and how this situation can be improved.

The initiative will also evaluate the results and describe the approaches and experiences of each country, and will compile relevant documents for use by other countries.

In the first phase, the participating countries of the Region were Guatemala and Barbados. Cooperation began in the latter half of 1993, and the first phase is expected to last between six and twelve months. But it is hoped that support for the planning and implementation of health-related activities in sustainable development will involve continuing collaboration between the countries, WHO/PAHO, UNDP, and other United Nations agencies under Capacity 21. It is clear that the countries which are preparing national plans for sustainable development are in urgent need of guidance to help them incorporate concerns related to health and the environment.

Recently Mexico has joined the group of countries that will receive support in this process.

2.1.4 *United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development in Small Island Developing States, SIDS*

The proposal for this conference was made during UNCED. Held in Barbados from 25 April to 6 May 1994, it was the first international conference to provide follow-up to the Rio de Janeiro meeting. Its significance was two-fold: it signaled that the small islands constitute a vulnerable group in need of international attention, and it was the first time that the United Nations organized an international conference for countries with these particular characteristics. The objective of the Conference was to prepare strategies and measures for promoting sustainable development in the small island developing states, using Agenda 21 as a base. However, the Program of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, prepared in the Conference, gives little consideration to human health or environmental health. This reflects a general lack of recognition of the tripartite relationship between health, the environment, and development, which constitutes the basis of sustainable development.

2.2 *At the Regional Level*

Just as at the global level, the Member States of the various WHO Regions have expressed the need to consider health in relation to the environment and sustainable development, to develop policies, and to establish for each state basic principles, strategic elements, and priorities for joint and individual action. Currently each Region is in the process of developing its own regional strategies, using the WHO global strategy as a foundation.

2.2.1 *The Region of Europe*

Actions carried out by the WHO Regional Office for Europe are of special interest to the Americas. In 1989 the Regional Office held the First European Conference on Environment and Health, bringing together ministers and other high-level representatives of the environmental and health sectors of 29 European countries and the European Commission. In its final session the Conference adopted the European Charter on Environment and Health, which is considered an extension of the policy of health for all and of the goals for Europe that were adopted by the 32 Member States of the WHO Region of Europe in 1984. The Charter also incorporates the basic philosophy of the World Commission on Environment and Development, created by the United Nations.

Currently the WHO Regional Office for Europe is collaborating with the European Commission to prepare the Second European Conference on Environment and Health, to be held in Helsinki from 20-22 June 1994. The Conference is expected to endorse an Environmental Health Action Plan for Europe.

2.2.2 *The Region of the Americas*

Our Own Agenda

The nature of the environmental problems facing the Latin American and Caribbean countries and their relation to development was described in a 1989 report entitled "Our Own Agenda," which was prepared by the Latin American and Caribbean Commission on Development and Environment. The report, which was sponsored by UNDP and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and drafted in preparation for UNCED, raises common regional concerns regarding these two vital subjects and suggests more focused approaches and ways of incorporating environmental factors into regional development programs. The report also emphasizes the need to define our own agenda and strategy for attaining sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean. Those involved in preparing the document included, in addition to specialists in the field, several organizations of the United Nations system, the Inter-American Development Bank, the regional offices of UNDP, the Office for Latin America and the

Caribbean of UNEP, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Office of Services and Projects of UNDP, and PAHO.

For the countries of the Region of the Americas "Our Own Agenda" provides an important complement to UNCED's Agenda 21. Its contents should be taken into account in preparing the health and environmental components of the sustainable development plans for the hemisphere's countries.

Health in the Regional Follow-up of UNCED

At the Regional level PAHO and the Organization of American States (OAS) have identified several areas of common interest, including environmental pollution, human resources development, poverty, and the environmental impact of tourism, among others. Through its Division of Health and Environment, PAHO participates in the ad hoc Group on the Regional Follow-Up of Agenda 21, coordinated by the OAS. This group seeks to forge an understanding among regional agencies in order to carry out the common objective of monitoring the results of UNCED. In this process PAHO focuses on the incorporation of aspects relating to health and environmental health.

In the Region of the Americas, several countries have determined that poverty is a priority environmental problem that must be solved in order to begin the process of sustainable development. A healthy environment is essential because the poor, in addition to being forced to live in unhealthful areas, are driven by need to adopt practices which contribute to environmental deterioration and to the destruction of natural resources in the areas where they live. This in turn affects food production and the prospects for survival. In response to this problem, the OAS, in its 20th Special Session of the General Assembly (Mexico City, Mexico, 17-19 February 1994) discussed the subject: Commitment on a Partnership for Development and Struggle to Overcome Extreme Poverty. PAHO participated in the Assembly and stressed the importance of health considerations in finding a solution to the problem. The priorities of Collective Cooperation for Development, of the OAS system, and of the recently created Inter-American Council for Comprehensive Development all give first mention to improving levels of nutrition and health and attending to population issues, including family planning.

In 1993 the Inter-American Development Bank and UNDP jointly sponsored a Forum on Social Reform and Poverty, at which PAHO again emphasized the need to view health concerns as an essential part of the problem. This forum was intended to call attention to the social dimension which, it was affirmed, is emerging as central to the development agenda of our countries in the coming years.

The relationship between economic development and health is also of concern to both the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and PAHO, leading the two agencies to cooperate in preparing a proposal on "Health, Social Equity, and Changing Production Patterns." This proposal revisits the subject of health in Latin America and the Caribbean, emphasizing the complementary relationship that exists between health and economic development.

When the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) held its Summit on Tourism in Kingston, Jamaica, in February 1992, the focus was especially on the critical importance of the environment and environmental quality with regard to the perception and reality of tourism. The leaders of the Caribbean Community committed themselves to work with regional and global organizations on a range of environmental issues. There was agreement on the need to devise practical approaches aimed at developing tourism in a sustainable manner and easing concerns that human and environmental health are being endangered.

Following these events, PAHO, the OAS, and the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI) proposed an initiative to support the Region of the Caribbean in its efforts to sustain tourist development while protecting the natural environment. In November 1993 the First Regional Conference on Environmental Health and the Sustainable Tourism Development in the Caribbean was held in Nassau, the Bahamas. One of its recommendations was to establish an advisory group made up of four or five Caribbean governments which would collaborate with representatives of PAHO, OAS, ECLAC, the Caribbean Tourism Organization, Caribbean Hotel Association, CEHI, and CARICOM in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of a program of activities. It was agreed that every effort should be made to ensure that the recommendations, especially the proposal for action on Environmental Health and Tourism, are integrated into the Action Program for the Development of the Small Island States. It was also recommended that steps be taken to develop a regional plan of action that is environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable in order to reverse the trends toward environmental degradation, and that the plan be submitted to the Global Conference as a model initiative for a group of islands in which the environment constitutes the basic resource for tourist development.

In the area of health and environmental health the Organization will continue making every effort to support the countries and to take advantage of and further the positive international situation with regional and global agencies, strengthening international cooperation and reinforcing the role of health and the environment in sustainable comprehensive development. In this regard, PAHO has also proposed the development of a Regional Plan for Investment in the Environment and Health (PIAS), that as an integral part of the agenda for sustainable development in the hemisphere, identifies the investments that will be necessary in the Region over the next 12 years to

overcome deficiencies in health services infrastructure, drinking water supply, and basic sanitation. The viability of this Plan will depend on a strategic alliance between all the international organizations involved in cooperation for development, and on the political commitment of governments to overcome these deficiencies and meet the future needs of a growing population. It will require, as well, close coordination at the national level between the health sector and other sectors involved in socioeconomic development.

In light of the foregoing it is clear that the implementation of Agenda 21 at the country level, including the preparation of plans for sustainable development, is first and foremost the responsibility of governments, and international cooperation should support those efforts. The support requested from the Director of PAHO in Resolution XIII of the XXXVI Meeting of the Directing Council--for the formulation of common policies and national regulations and plans relating to health and the environment in sustainable development, aimed at protecting and promoting human health--can be greatly strengthened through the process of preparing the Pan American Conference on Health and the Environment in Sustainable Development, and take concrete form in the Pan American Charter on Health and the Environment in Development.

2.3 *At the Country Level*

Agenda 21 requests the countries to prepare national plans for sustainable development. Many countries have responded to this appeal and are in the process of preparing their plans, using their own resources or support provided by international or bilateral agencies, NGOs, and others. Although the health sector was not sufficiently involved in the preparatory stages of UNCED, as can be seen from the country documents presented to UNCED in 1992, the current process of preparing national plans offers a new opportunity for the health sector to make known its concerns and needs and to participate actively in planning, with the goal of ensuring that the plans for sustainable development and environmental programs give adequate consideration to health needs.

In the Region of the Americas, PAHO, working mainly through the Division of Health and Environment (HPE) and the PAHO/WHO Representative Offices in the countries, has concentrated on providing support to the health authorities so that the sector can participate actively in preparing the national plans for sustainable development. This has included the production of documents aimed at strengthening the national processes initiated by various countries of the Region. It is expected that national gatherings will be convened during 1994 to facilitate the incorporation of health components into the national plans for sustainable development, contributing to fulfillment of the commitments made at UNCED.

The national processes that have been undertaken toward this end include the creation of mechanisms to promote intersectoral coordination and action. This

coordination will need to begin at high levels so as to ensure that the responsible entities have sufficient authority to obtain the necessary cooperation. However, it should be noted that at the country level Agenda 21 is only beginning to have an impact on the health sector. This is not surprising, since the proposed activities are long-range, touch many sectors, and involve several disciplines. Moreover, if the health sector is to carry out all the necessary actions to incorporate health and environmental health in the implementation of Agenda 21, the sector itself must be restructured, so that it can better perform its own functions and also provide the inputs needed by other sectors within the framework of comprehensive sustainable development. It will be necessary, also, to expand and enhance the mechanisms of coordination so that the health sector can participate appropriately and effectively, jointly with other sectors, in environmental health activities and can exercise the necessary leadership. Finally, it is essential that the other sectors take an interest in the health and environmental health component and give the health sector an opportunity to participate in the process.

At UNCED it was recognized that steps must be taken to create or strengthen the internal capacities of the developing countries if they are to comply with the recommendations of Agenda 21. This implies the preparation of a national action program, including an examination of needs related to capacity-building and the potential for preparing national sustainable development strategies, to be carried out preferably before 1994. The determination of a country's capacities and needs will require extensive consultation with multiple actors: internally, with both governmental and nongovernmental agencies, and externally, with international and bilateral agencies and others that can contribute to the effort. The Agenda 21 recommendation which calls for strengthening the national capacity of the health sector is consonant with Resolution XIII of the XXXVI Meeting of the Directing Council of PAHO.

The countries of the Region, responding to PAHO's appeal to begin preparing chapters on health and the environment for inclusion in the national plans for sustainable development, are creating or strengthening the initial mechanisms of coordination in order to analyze their health needs. For example, the seven countries of the Central American isthmus have prepared National Action Plans on Ecology and Health, which were approved and backed by the Second Central American Conference on Ecology and Health (ECOSAL II) in September 1993. Processes aimed at incorporating health concerns into the national action plans are under way in Barbados and Guatemala, and are beginning in Mexico. In Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Paraguay, the process is in the initial stages. However, it should be noted that one of the principal obstacles that has emerged in these cases has been difficulty in initiating and maintaining an adequate dialogue with the other sectors. This confirms the need to take steps to encourage that dialogue and the preparation of common principles, policies, and strategies that facilitate the process.

Several countries of the Region have shown interest in the follow-up of UNCED and have undertaken activities aimed at coordinating their health and environmental policies. For example, the Central American countries have drafted a Declaration on Ecology and Health in the Central American Isthmus, signaling their interest in reaching consensus among the various national sectors in regard to health, the environment, and development. This attitude is apparent in other subregions as well, including the Caribbean and the Southern Cone.

Intersectoral participation must be based from the start on reliable and up-to-date information on past, present, and planned activities in each country, so that national and international institutions can identify areas of common or complementary interest, while avoiding duplication and waste. The national processes will go a long way toward facilitating such an exchange of information and the subsequent coordination and action. It will be the task of the health sector to propose processes for the evaluation and management of environmental health.

Environmental health programs have been an important part of the activities of PAHO/WHO at least since the 1950s. They have evolved in accordance with the changing situation of the countries and in accordance with mandates from the Governing Bodies that have provided direction and resources for their execution. In 1990 the Governing Bodies approved nine strategic orientations for the Organization; these include Health in Development as a central strategy into which the other eight orientations flow. Priority is given to efforts to attain greater equity in the living and health conditions of the hemisphere's population and improve the access to basic health services, both essential aspects of sustainable development. Resolution XIII of the XXIII Pan American Sanitary Conference grants broad mandates to the Organization to implement the new priority, around which PAHO's strategic orientations for the quadrennium 1991-1994 are built. Resolution XI of the same Conference complements the previous resolution in regard to health and the environment.

In response to the deterioration of infrastructure and of health and social conditions in the countries of the Region--a situation dramatically evidenced by the violent outbreak of cholera epidemics in several countries, the increase in poisonings by pesticides and other toxic chemicals, the rise in industrial accidents with environmental repercussions, and other such problems--PAHO has prepared, among other initiatives, the Regional Plan for Investment in the Environment and Health. The Plan has been approved by the Governing Bodies in an effort to come to grips with the deplorable health and social situation in the countries.

The environmental health risks that result from inharmonious development are many and complex. While there is ample economic justification for the slowness to take corrective action, the lack of progress stems also from a lack of knowledge, information,

and sensitivity regarding the impact of development on health; the lack of effective legislation in favor of health; the separation between sectors; the limited sectoral capacity; and the lack of resources, trained personnel, and political power in the health and environmental sectors. Many improvements could be obtained by making use of existing national resources, backed up by well-managed cooperation on the part of external agencies. A first step in this direction would be to initiate dialogue in an appropriate forum between sectors and institutions in the countries, beginning with an exchange of information.

The operational mechanisms at the country level that prepared the contributions for UNCED were the intersectoral working groups. These groups can facilitate the process of consultation. Also important are the high-level commissions that Resolution XIII of the XXXVI Directing Council suggests be established in the countries. These commissions are intended to improve the effectiveness of actions on health and the environment, incorporating health-related elements into the mechanisms that direct policies on environment and development, as well as the modalities for implementing the options chosen. This implies an understanding of the possibilities and limitations of the environment and the needs of the population in question.

In sum, the health sector in the Region has long been aware of health problems related to the environment and development; however, its concerns and needs have not been adequately incorporated into national development plans nor into the planning of other sectors, as would be needed in order to attain the necessary integration and achieve optimum results in environmental protection, development, and human health. The reasons for this reflect, on the one hand, the limited capacity of the health institutions, but they also have to do with the lack of opportunities for constructive dialogue at the highest levels of intersectoral planning. Such opportunities should be developed and supported. The process of preparing the national conferences on health and the

between the human environment, health, and development. In other words, the health sector will need to perform leadership functions as well as the functions of advisor and participant. In both cases intersectoral cooperation will be required to ensure that these efforts are productive. The functions needed in order to carry out these tasks include, at a minimum, the following:

2.3.2 Leadership Functions

Advocate and defend preventive measures to protect public health, by raising health considerations in the formulation of policies; helping to sensitize related sectors, business, and the public regarding environmental health problems; and promoting environmental and behavior changes that can have a positive impact on health.

Improve the ability of communities to manage environmental health, including preventive and corrective measures, by building the capacity of local authorities to carry out decentralized functions; stimulating initiatives in the private sector; and supporting the development of community self-help and family life programs.

Carry out assessments of health risks and impacts, based on adequate monitoring, in order to identify health hazards linked to existing environmental practices and conditions and to proposed changes in land use, settlements, housing, employment, industrial development, energy generation, and water resources. Evaluations should include assessments based on environmental data produced by the monitoring activities of other agencies and sectors.

Carry out epidemiological surveillance of diseases and public services related to the environment, informing officials at decision-making levels and the public with regard to the health trends and risks of communities and populations.

2.3.3 Advisory Services and Participation

- Train personnel to identify, monitor, prevent, and control environmental health risks.
- Establish and operate programs and services of environmental control.
- Develop and utilize institutional capacities for emergency response.
- Develop standards, guidelines, and legislation in collaboration with other institutions.
- Incorporate evaluations of health consequences as integral elements of sustainable development.

- Design and carry out research on environmental health, including environmental problems, conditions, and interventions related to health.

In light of the foregoing, it is evident that the realization of a Pan American Conference on Health and the Environment in Sustainable Development is not only necessary and timely but also urgent, so that the health sector of the countries and the Region can be provided with clear criteria and guidelines on how to contribute more effectively to the process of preparing the national plans for sustainable development and to their later implementation.

3. The Pan American Conference on Health and the Environment in Sustainable Development

It is proposed that, through a joint effort by the countries of the Region together with global, regional, bilateral, nongovernmental, and other organizations, steps be taken to define and adopt a set of common policies in the Member States aimed at ensuring fulfillment of the commitments made at UNCED in regard to meeting the health needs of the Region's countries. The Strategic Orientations and Program Priorities of PAHO, the Ninth General Program of Work of WHO, and the Regional Plan for Investment in the Environment and Health, as well as related regional and subregional plans, proposals, and processes, all contain important elements that will be considered and incorporated in preparing the national and intercountry plans of action on health and the environment in sustainable development.

3.1 *Scope of the Conference*

The Agenda 21 program of action integrates goals related to sustainable development and primary health care, taking into account the needs of the environment. The linkage of improvements in health, environmental, and socioeconomic conditions is intended to equip the population to build sustainable development. These intersectoral activities include efforts in education, housing, natural resources, industrial development, agriculture, and public works, and will involve community groups, businesses, schools and universities, religious, civic, and cultural organizations, and others. The countries should prepare national plans of action in order to map out cooperation between the various levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and local communities. At the global level, UNCED indicates that these activities related to health should be coordinated by an appropriate international organization, such as WHO.

In addition, an aspect of utmost importance for the sustainable development of the Americas, that requires attention, and on which it will be necessary to achieve consensus at the highest level internationally, are the environmental and health problems that are shared between countries and groups of countries and that relate to economic

development, and that become even more significant in the context of sustainable development.

3.2 *Objective*

The immediate objective is the holding of a regional conference with participation by the highest levels of the health sector and other sectors, mainly those related to the environment and to economic and social development in the countries. The conference will lay the foundation so that the health sector and other sectors can fulfill adequately the commitments of UNCED, principally those in Chapter 6 on Protecting and Promoting Human Health, and make a significant contribution to sustainable development in the countries. To achieve this end the other sectors must have a clear vision of the needs in health, and there should be complete accord on the principles and policies that will guide intersectoral cooperation at the level of the countries and of the Region.

3.3 *Expected Outcomes*

One of the most important results expected of the Conference is its contribution to the task of integrating the various social and economic sectors concerned with environmental health, so that their needs can be incorporated into the national plans of action on the environment in line with the recommendations of Agenda 21. A fundamental step toward this integration would be the adoption of a Pan American Charter on Health and the Environment in Sustainable Development of the Americas, which will be presented for consideration by the Conference participants.

It is expected that the process of preparing the Pan American Charter and the Conference will itself achieve an important result, namely the activation of national mechanisms at a high political level that can define the necessary policies and strategic elements and promote the preparation of operational instruments that reflect the concerns of all social sectors and the efforts of various groups to attain health objectives. In this context good use can be made of the Regional Plan for Investment in the Environment and Health, which is expected to play an essential role in supporting the efforts of the countries to reorient their policies of investments in the social sectors, thus increasing the flow of capital needed to overcome current deficiencies in sanitation and health.

For the Organization, the Pan American Charter on Health and the Environment in Sustainable Development of the Americas will provide direction for its programs, jointly with the Resolutions of the Governing Bodies on related matters. It is hoped that the Governments will give consideration to the Pan American Charter as they formulate their national policies on health and the environment in development.

3.4 *Alliances*

Given the importance of the Conference, the complexity of its content, its multisectoral nature, and the high level of its participants, it is clear that collaboration and support will be needed from various international agencies in addition to PAHO, both in the process of developing the Conference and in the Conference itself. In particular, it is hoped that the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, which have political and operational ties to development sectors in the countries, will contribute to this effort. Preliminary contacts are under way with a view to obtaining the participation and financial support of these agencies.

3.5 *Development Plan for the Conference*

The Pan American Conference described here has purposes and objectives related to both process and product. Those related to process include all the results derived from the preparatory activities at the country level, as well as those of the Conference itself. The product will include the support and reference documents and publications prepared for the Conference, as well as the conclusions, proceedings, and other materials generated by the event. The principal aspects can be summarized as follows:

3.5.1 *General Purposes of the Pan American Conference*

- To provide an opportunity for intersectoral dialogue, with the participation of all the countries of the Hemisphere, on the health-related commitments adopted at UNCED (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) and at the presidential Summit of the Americas 1994 (Miami, December 1994).
- To set forth clearly the concerns related to health and the environment that should be taken into consideration in the process of making decisions about sustainable development.
- To define and adopt a set of policies common to all the countries of the Region with a view to fulfilling the commitments of UNCED and of the Summit of the Americas 1994, in order to better serve the health needs of the Region's countries.

3.5.2 *Specific Objectives of the Pan American Conference*

- To set forth clearly, in the context of UNCED's Agenda 21, concerns related to health and the environment that should be taken into account in the process of making decisions about development programs and projects, and the role the health sector can play in this process.

- To suggest mechanisms for achieving the integration of policies in health and sustainable development, in order to contribute to the amelioration of poverty and the overall social crisis, taking into account the new regional reality in which countries and markets are increasingly integrated.
- To present, discuss, and adopt, in the form of a Pan American Charter, a set of policies and strategies that enable the health sector to participate in decision-making and action programs aimed at promoting environmental conditions favorable to human health.
- To strengthen and promote the participation of a larger number of institutions, sectors, and governments in the Regional Plan for Investment in the Environment and Health.

3.5.3 *Realization of the Conference*

Realization of the Conference can be divided into four interrelated and complementary stages: (1) a preparatory stage, in which the plans and basic documents will be prepared; (2) a national stage, in which national conferences will be promoted and held in the countries; (3) a regional stage, consisting of the holding of the Pan American Conference; and (4) a stage of publications and associated follow-up activities, in which the proceedings and documents from the Conference will be published and disseminated.

Preparatory Stage

In this stage steps will be taken to formalize the alliance with institutions which are cosponsoring the event. Basic documents will be prepared on the following subjects: Health in Agenda 21; Health and the Environment in Sustainable Development in the Region of the Americas; Health, Environment, and Development; and the first version of the Pan American Charter.

National Stage

The national stage will provide the foundation for the entire process. In each country steps will be taken to clarify the commitments that the country adopted at UNCED, diagnose the obstacles to carrying out these commitments, and identify intersectoral and international actions that can help to overcome some of these obstacles. In addition, efforts will be made to increase public awareness of the interrelationships between health and the environment in the process of sustainable development.

The national stage will require development of a broad mechanism for intersectoral consultation at the governmental and nongovernmental levels, following the process adopted for the preparation of UNCED with the necessary adaptations. Intersectoral working groups will be established for this purpose. With respect to the creation of the high-level commissions (Resolution XIII of the XXVI Meeting of the Directing Council of PAHO), support will be sought from the working group which the country organized in preparation for UNCED, including or strengthening the role of the health sector, of parliamentary groups, and of nongovernmental organizations. It is expected that these activities will culminate in a national conference of consensus in each country.

Several countries of the Region have already begun the process or have demonstrated interest in holding a national conference.

Regional Stage

This stage consists basically of the holding of the Pan American Conference on Health and the Environment in Sustainable Development (three days) and a pre-Conference event (two days). The final structure and program will depend to a large extent on the national conferences and the conclusions they reach, and will reflect discussions with authorities of the countries and with the agencies cosponsoring the event. Presented below are some provisional basic assumptions for the development of the pre-Conference and the Conference, and a preliminary program.

General Assumptions

- The headquarters of the Pan American Conference on Health and the Environment in Sustainable Development will be at the PAHO Headquarters in Washington, D.C.
- The pre-Conference will be held on 17 and 18 August 1995. The Pan American Conference will be held on 21, 22, and 23 August 1995.
- Each country will be represented at the Conference by its Ministers of Health, Environment, and Development (Public Works, Economy, Planning) and representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The pre-Conference will be attended by national advisors in the respective areas.
- Invitations to attend the Pan American Conference will also be extended to bilateral and international agencies, parliamentary organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and others.

Organizational Considerations

- The high-level representation of the countries, with an average of three ministers each, requires special political advisory services in order to insure that the political aspects are adequately taken care of in the preparatory process and in the development of the event.
- Each country that has held a national conference will be offered time in the program to report on the event and its conclusions.
- On account of its scope and magnitude, the Conference will require the collaboration of cosponsors who, among other functions, will facilitate the participation of ministers from sectors other than health. The cosponsors will participate in preparing the program and other aspects of the Conference.

3.5.4 Pre-Conference Program

The program of the pre-Conference will be structured as follows:

Day one, morning session:

- Presentation of credentials
- Opening and introduction
- Questions related to organization and program of the pre-Conference
- Presentation of the Conference documents

Day one, afternoon session:

- Presentation of selected case studies (a panel of four countries representing diverse realities, chosen from among those countries which held a national conference, will report on the conferences and their conclusions, and will outline their plans for pursuing a comprehensive vision of health and environment in sustainable development)

Day two, morning session:

- Forum for organizations (open session for multilateral and bilateral agencies and for nongovernmental organizations)

Day two, afternoon session:

- Final discussions and approval of recommendations for the Conference

- Closure

3.5.5 *Conference Program*

The program of the Pan American Conference will be divided into three segments: orientation, analysis and discussion, and resolutions. These segments would occupy a half-day, a day, and a half-day respectively. The program of the Pan American Conference will be structured as follows:

Day one, morning session:

- Opening ceremony
- Keynote address
- Presentation of conference documents

Day one, afternoon session:

- Panel of invited specialists present remarks on the issues with a futuristic perspective, comparing the consequences of **taking action** with those of **not taking action**; that is, a hypothesis as to what may happen in the future if current policies are left unaltered, compared to what can happen if comprehensive policies are adopted
- Discussion

Day two, morning session:

- Presentation of country reports

Day two, afternoon session:

- Presentation of country reports

Day three, morning session:

- Presentation, discussion, and adoption of the Pan American Charter
- Closing ceremonies

Day three, afternoon session:

- Ceremony at the White House at which the Pan American Charter is presented to the President of the United States (proposed)

3.5.6 Technical, Administrative, and Operational Considerations

The importance of the Conference and the complex process of preparation and realization will necessitate an infrastructure that includes, at a minimum, an Organizing Commission and an Executive Secretariat.

The Organizing Commission will be responsible for analyzing and deciding various questions related to the political, technical, operational, administrative, and financial aspects of the Conference. It should include a representative of every unit of PAHO involved directly in the event; a representative of each cosponsoring agency; and special consultants. In principle the Organizing Commission will meet once a month starting in July 1994, and will come together for extraordinary sessions when necessary.

The Executive Secretariat will be housed in the PAHO Division of Health and Environment. Its staff will include, in principle, an executive secretary, a specialist in conference organization, and a secretary.

A tentative schedule for the organization and holding of the Conference, including preparatory and follow-up activities and monitoring of progress, is as follows:

March 1994

- Completion of the information document for the Executive Committee of PAHO
- Completion of various documents to support the national processes in preparation for the Conference
- Beginning of pre-negotiation with prospective cosponsors
- Beginning of the national processes; formation of high-level commissions
- Completion of first draft of the Pan American Charter

April 1994

- Support for the countries in the planning of the national conferences and preceding activities
- Distribution of support documents to the countries
- Contacts with other interested international agencies

May 1994

- Preparation of proposals for the operation of the Organizing Commission and Executive Secretariat
- Preparation of a detailed budget
- Establishment of contacts in the countries in support of the national processes

June 1994

- Presentation to the Executive Committee of PAHO of the document *Proposal for a Pan American Conference on Health and the Environment in Sustainable Development*
- Incorporation of suggested changes and revision of timetable/schedule
- First meeting of the Organizing Commission
- Official installation of the Executive Secretariat
- Holding of national conferences

July 1994

- Formal public announcement of the Pan American Conference
- Second meeting of the Organizing Commission
- Holding of national conferences

August 1994

- Third meeting of the Organizing Commission
- Holding of national conferences

September 1994

- Fourth meeting of the Organizing Commission
- Holding of national conferences

- Confirmation of cosponsors
- Holding of national conferences
- October 1994*
- Fifth meeting of the Organizing Commission
- Identification of participants in the Pan American Conference; preparation of list and classification
- Holding of national conferences
- November 1994*
- Sixth meeting of the Organizing Commission
- Holding of national conferences
- Invitations to specialists and speakers
- December 1994*
- Seventh meeting of the Organizing Commission
- Holding of national conferences
- Summit of the Americas
- Presentation and discussion of first progress report to the Subcommittee on Planning and Programming (SPP)
- January 1995*
- Eighth meeting of the Organizing Commission
- Holding of national conferences
- Changes in programming in accordance with suggestions of the SPP
- Issuing of invitations to the participants to reserve dates

February 1995

- Ninth meeting of the Organizing Commission
- Conclusion of the national phase of the Conference
- Reception of country reports

March 1995

- Tenth meeting of the Organizing Commission
- Detailed analysis of the political aspects

April 1995

- Presentation and discussion of second progress report to the SPP
- Changes in programming in accordance with suggestions of the SPP
- Eleventh meeting of the Organizing Commission
- Consolidation/summary of the national reports
- General review of the proposed Pan American Charter
- Beginning of preparation of the basic document

May 1995

- Twelfth meeting of the Organizing Commission
- Completion of the basic Conference document
- Completion of preparation of the proposed Pan American Charter

June 1995

- Thirteenth meeting of the Organizing Commission
- Completion of its administrative tasks

- Preparation of final program, confirmation of details with speakers, orientation meetings

July 1995

- Fourteenth meeting of the Organizing Commission
- Advance shipment of documents to participants, credentialing

August 1995

- Fifteenth meeting of the Organizing Commission
- Holding of the Conference and associated activities

September 1995

- Sixteenth meeting of the Organizing Commission
- Alternative month for holding the Conference

October to December 1995

- Completion and distribution of the final documents
- Final report of the Conference

On the basis of the organizational considerations and the activities and processes outlined above, a preliminary estimate of the budget for the Conference is as follows:

3.6 *Preliminary Budget*

1.	Preparatory activities	US\$ 160,000
	Executive Secretariat	
	13 months x 10,000/months	US\$ 130,000
	Preparation of documents	30,000
2.	Support for holding of the national conferences and meetings	40,000
3.	Holding of the Pan American Conference	320,000
	Support for the national delegations: airfare and per diem estimated at US\$2,000 per person; 32 countries expected to participate with three persons per country, for approximate total of 100 people)	200,000
	Publicity and press relations: (Shelves, equipment, materials, reproduction of documents)	60,000
	Conference Infrastructure: (Simultaneous translation, security, cleaning, secretarial services, coffee, materials, equipment)	60,000
4.	Follow-up activities	40,000
	Executive Secretariat (two months x US\$ 10,000/month)	20,000
	Printing and distribution of the final document, promotion and establishment of action strategies	20,000
5.	Unforeseen contingencies	40,000
	TOTAL	US\$ 600,000

The detailed budget to be prepared later should evaluate the total costs, both direct and indirect. It is expected that PAHO will contribute US\$ 200,000 toward this budget, and \$400,000 will be contributed by the cosponsoring agencies.

CE113/12 (Eng.)
ANNEX 1

**Report on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and
Its Significance for the Work of the Pan American Health Organization
(Document CD36/22)**