



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



**37th DIRECTING COUNCIL**  
45th SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

*Washington D.C., 27 September - 1 October 1993*

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***RESOLUTION***

***CD37.R5***

**HEALTH OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

*THE 37th DIRECTING COUNCIL,*

Having seen Document CD37/20 on the initiative "Health of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas";

Taking into account the recommendations formulated by the participants at the Working Meeting on Indigenous Peoples and Health, held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, from 13 to 17 April 1993;

Recognizing that the living and health conditions of the estimated 43 million indigenous persons in the Region of the Americas are deficient, as reflected in excess mortality due to avoidable causes and in reduced life expectancy at birth, which demonstrates the persistence and even the aggravation of inequalities among indigenous populations in comparison with other homologous social groups;

Considering the aspiration of indigenous peoples to take charge of their own institutions and ways of life, the need for them to assert their own identity, and the need to respect their rights with regard to health and the environment;

Recognizing the unique contribution that indigenous peoples make to the preservation of ethnic and cultural diversity in the Americas, to biodiversity and a balanced ecology, and, most especially, to the health and nutrition of society;

Emphasizing the need to take a new look at, and respect the integrity of, the social, cultural, religious, and spiritual values and practices of indigenous peoples, including those related to health promotion and maintenance and the management of diseases and illnesses; and

Reiterating the importance of the strategy for the transformation of national health systems and the proposal for the development of alternative models of care at the level of local health systems as a valuable tactical resource and a fundamental requisite for dealing with current problems relating to insufficient coverage, inadequate access, and the lack of acceptance of health services on the part of indigenous populations,

*RESOLVES*

1. To adopt Document CD37/20, which describes the initiative "Health of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas," and the report of the Winnipeg Working Meeting containing the conclusions and recommendations on which the initiative is based.

2. To urge the Member Governments to:

a) Facilitate the establishment or strengthening of a high-level technical commission or other mechanism of consensus, as appropriate, with the participation of leaders and representatives of indigenous peoples, for the formulation of policies and strategies and the development of activities in the areas of health and the environment for the benefit of specific indigenous populations;

b) Strengthen the technical, administrative, and managerial capacity of national and local institutions that are responsible for the health of indigenous populations with a view to progressively overcoming the lack of information in this area and ensuring greater access to health services and quality care, thus contributing to a higher degree of equity;

c) Implement intersectoral actions, as appropriate in each case, in the areas of health and the environment both in the official sector and through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), universities, and research centers that work in collaboration with indigenous organizations;

d) Promote the transformation of health systems and support the development of alternative models of care, including traditional medicine and research into quality and safety, for indigenous populations within the local health system strategy;

e) Promote the development of disease prevention and health promotion programs in order to address these problems and the most important areas relating to health of indigenous peoples in their countries.

3. To request the Director, within the limits of available resources to:

a) Promote the participation of indigenous persons and their communities in all aspects of PAHO's work on the health of indigenous persons;

- b) Identify technical cooperation resources within existing cooperation programs and provide support for the mobilization of additional resources at the international and national level for implementation and evaluation of the initiative "Health of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas";
- c) Coordinate the regional effort by promoting the establishment of information and mutual cooperation networks between organizations, centers, and institutions whose activities are concerned with the health of indigenous peoples, organizations, and communities, enlisting the Organization's existing mechanisms, initiatives, and programs at the regional level and in the countries and also seeking the cooperation of other agencies and organizations;
- d) Expand the evaluation of living conditions and the health situation to include the indigenous peoples of the Region, with a view to gradually overcoming the current lack of information in this area at both the regional and the country level;
- e) Promote collaborative research at the regional level and in selected countries on high-priority health issues and health care for indigenous peoples.

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