

172nd SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Washington, D.C., USA, 26–30 June 2023

Provisional Agenda Item 5.7

CE172/23
25 May 2023
Original: English

AMENDMENTS TO THE STATUTE OF THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN CENTER ON HEALTH SCIENCES INFORMATION (BIREME)

Introduction

1. The purpose of this document is to present to the Executive Committee, through its Subcommittee on Program, Budget, and Administration, a proposed modification to the Statute of the Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information (BIREME or the Center).

2. BIREME is the specialized center of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) for technical cooperation on health sciences information and communication in the Region of the Americas. Established in São Paulo, Brazil, in 1967, BIREME promotes the development of national and regional capacity and infrastructure for the management, organization, indexing, preservation, and dissemination of, and access to, scientific information, knowledge, and evidence, keeping abreast of international state-of-the-art methodologies and technology. PAHO technical cooperation through BIREME has made a significant contribution to the democratization of quality information in health, which is essential to health development and social inclusion in the Region.

Background

3. From its inception in 1967, BIREME operated under the legal framework of a Maintenance Agreement subscribed by PAHO and the Government of Brazil, through the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the State Secretariat of Health of São Paulo, and the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP), whose campus housed BIREME's physical headquarters.

4. In 2009, recognizing that BIREME's institutional framework did not adequately meet the Center's governance, management, and financing needs, the 49th Directing Council, through Resolution CD49.R5,¹ adopted a Statute for the Center. It established different categories of membership and a new structure, consisting of three bodies:

¹ Available at: <https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/406>.

- a) The BIREME Advisory Committee, comprising PAHO and the Government of Brazil as permanent members, plus five representatives of the Members of BIREME (i.e., five PAHO Member States selected on a rotating basis by the Directing Council of PAHO).
- b) The BIREME Scientific Committee, made up of scientific information specialists selected by the BIREME Advisory Committee.
- c) The Secretariat of BIREME, whose function is the technical and administrative management and execution of BIREME's work program under the direction of an international Director appointed by and responsible to the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (PASB or the Bureau).

5. In addition to establishing a new Statute for BIREME, Resolution CD49.R5 also requested the Director of PASB to:

- (a) undertake negotiations with the Government of Brazil in order to conclude a new Headquarters Agreement for BIREME that defines the responsibilities of the Government with regard to the maintenance of BIREME, as well as its privileges and immunities in that country;
- (b) undertake negotiations with the Government of Brazil, through the appropriate Ministries and the Federal University of São Paulo, in order to conclude a new Facilities Agreement for BIREME's continued operation within the campus of the University, to include issues related to BIREME's physical premises, personnel, journal collection, and other support for the Center.

6. From 2009 to 2015, when the BIREME Maintenance Agreement expired,² the Bureau sought to conclude negotiations with the Government of Brazil for the BIREME Headquarters Agreement. However, as negotiations did not progress, in 2017 PAHO and the Government of Brazil entered into a specific five-year cooperation agreement (*Termo de Cooperação n° 93 – Desenvolvimento e aprimoramento da BIREME*) in order to guarantee the continued operations and financial stability of BIREME. This Agreement was renewed in 2022 and will expire on 2 February 2027.

7. In 2015, after almost 50 years of BIREME's residence at UNIFESP premises, the University notified PAHO that BIREME could no longer maintain its headquarters on the UNIFESP campus. As a result, in 2016 the Bureau relocated BIREME's facilities to rental premises in the city of São Paulo.

² The first agreement was signed on 3 March 1967 and the last one on 2 December 2004. The 2004 Maintenance Agreement expired on 1 March 2015.

8. In light of the changing circumstances since 2009, the Statute of BIREME needs to be modified to account for the fact that the Center is no longer physically housed on the UNIFESP campus and to grant the Bureau the flexibility to relocate the Center's facilities, as necessary.

9. The Director of PASB will continue to pursue the prompt signature of the new BIREME Headquarters Agreement between PAHO and the Government of Brazil to define the commitments and responsibilities of both parties, as well as BIREME's privileges and immunities in Brazil.

Proposed Modifications to the Statute of BIREME

10. Proposed modifications to the Statute of BIREME are shown below. These modifications, as well as other actions presented herein, have been developed in consultation with the Government of Brazil, taking into consideration the feedback received by PASB from the BIREME Advisory Committee and from PAHO Member States through PAHO Governing Bodies.

Article I Legal Status

The Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information, also known by its original name the Regional Library of Medicine ("BIREME"), is a specialized center of the Pan American Health Organization ("PAHO"), Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization ("WHO"), established pursuant to the resolutions of the Directing Council of PAHO and operating continuously in Brazil ~~since its creation, with headquarters in the city of São Paulo, since its creation, effected through an agreement signed between PAHO and the Government of the Federative Republic of Brazil.~~

Article XI Facilities

~~The arrangements regarding the physical facilities and other services provided to BIREME, headquartered since its creation on the UNIFESP campus in the city of São Paulo, Brazil, should be reflected in an agreement involving PAHO, the Government of Brazil, and UNIFESP.~~

Action by the Executive Committee

11. The Executive Committee is invited to review the information presented in this document, provide any comments it deems pertinent, and consider approving the proposed resolution presented in Annex A.

Annexes

172nd SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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CE172/23
Annex A
Original: English

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

AMENDMENTS TO THE STATUTE OF THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN CENTER ON HEALTH SCIENCES INFORMATION (BIREME)

THE 172nd SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,

(PP) Having reviewed the proposed modification of the Statute of the Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information (BIREME or the Center) reviewed and recommended for adoption by the 17th Session of the Subcommittee on Program, Budget, and Administration of the Executive Committee held from 22–23 March, as described in the document *Amendments to the Statute of the Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information (BIREME)* (Document CE172/23),

RESOLVES:

(OP) To recommend that the 60th Directing Council approve the amendments to the Statute of the Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information (BIREME) and adopt a resolution along the following lines:

AMENDMENTS TO THE STATUTE OF THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN CENTER ON HEALTH SCIENCES INFORMATION (BIREME)

THE 60th DIRECTING COUNCIL,

(PP1) Having reviewed the proposed modification of the Statute of the Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information (BIREME or the Center) as described in the document *Amendments to the Statute of the Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information (BIREME)* (Document CD60/__);

(PP2) Considering that in 2015, after almost 50 years of BIREME's residence at Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP) premises, the University notified the Pan American Health Organization that BIREME could no longer maintain its headquarters on the UNIFESP campus for which in 2016 the Pan American Sanitary Bureau relocated BIREME's facilities to rental premises in the city of São Paulo;

(PP3) Recognizing that in light of these events, the Statute of BIREME needs to be modified to account for the fact that the Center is no longer physically housed on the UNIFESP campus and to grant the Bureau the flexibility to relocate the Center's facilities, as necessary,

RESOLVES:

(OP) To approve the amendments to the Statute of BIREME, attached hereto as an integral part of this resolution (Appendix).

Appendix

Appendix

PROPOSED STATUTE OF BIREME

Article I Legal Status

The Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information, also known by its original name the Regional Library of Medicine ("BIREME"), is a specialized center of the Pan American Health Organization ("PAHO"), Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization ("WHO"), established pursuant to the resolutions of the Directing Council of PAHO and operating continuously in Brazil since its creation.

Article II Objective

The objective of BIREME is to contribute to health development for the populations of the Region of the Americas, promoting cooperation among countries, the democratization of access to scientific and technical information, legislation and the sharing of knowledge and evidence to support steady improvement of the health, education and research systems.

Article III Functions

To meet its objective, BIREME shall have the following technical cooperation functions, included in the Regional Strategic Plan of PAHO:

1. Support and strengthen health sciences information systems in PAHO Member States.
2. Help develop and strengthen public health actions and policies and national and regional capacities and infrastructure for the acquisition, organization, access, publication, and use of information, knowledge, and scientific evidence regarding health processes and decision-making.
3. Help develop and strengthen networks of institutions and individual producers, intermediaries, and users of scientific, legal, technical, and factual information in health through the cooperative management and operation of information products, services, and events in the common forum of the Virtual Health Library, in cooperation with the complementary national, regional, and international networks.

4. Contribute to the global development of health sciences information and communication through partnerships, programs, networks, and projects among international, regional, and national institutions, with a view to increasing the visibility, access, quality, use, and impact of the scientific and technical output of developing countries and regions.
5. Help develop health science and technical terminology in Spanish, French, English, and Portuguese.
6. Help develop distance education systems in the Region of the Americas, through infrastructure and capacity-building for access to and the dissemination of information as an integral part of PAHO's Virtual Public Health Campus.
7. Support and promote collaboration among governments, professionals, health workers, consumers, relevant scientific institutions and international organizations, and society at large to establish and strengthen national health information systems that promote education and ongoing research through innovation and the application of information and communication technologies.

Article IV Membership

BIREME Members are defined below under the following categories: Member States, Participating States, and Participating Organizations.

1. Member States of BIREME: All PAHO Member States.*
2. Participating States of BIREME: Any WHO Member State may be admitted as a "Participating State of BIREME," under the following conditions:
 - a. the WHO Member State must communicate to the Director** of PAHO its intention to participate in scientific and technical cooperation and to contribute financially to BIREME through annual contributions established by the Advisory Committee of BIREME, as described in Article IX of this document, and recognize the present Statute and follow its respective regulations, and
 - b. the Advisory Committee must endorse the proposed membership as a Participating State of BIREME by at least a two-thirds majority of its Members.

* Includes PAHO Member States, Participating States, and Associate Members.

** In this document, the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau will be referred to as the Director of the Pan American Health Organization

3. Participating Organizations of BIREME: Any international public organization with specific expertise in scientific and technical information and communication may be admitted as a “Participating Organization of BIREME,” under the following conditions:
 - a. the international organization must communicate to the Director of PAHO its intention to participate in scientific and technical cooperation and contribute financially to BIREME, through annual contributions established by Advisory Committee of BIREME, as described in Article IX of this document, and recognize the present Statute and follow its respective regulations; and
 - b. the Advisory Committee must endorse the proposed membership as a Participating Organization of BIREME by at least a two-thirds majority of its Members.
4. A Participating State or Participating Organization may withdraw its membership in BIREME by so communicating to the Director of PAHO and the Advisory Committee. Membership shall terminate six (6) months after the Director of PAHO receives the notification.

Article V Structure

BIREME shall consist of the following bodies:

- (1) Advisory Committee
- (2) Scientific Committee
- (3) Secretariat

Article VI Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee is a permanent body of BIREME and performs advisory functions for the Director of PAHO.

1. The Advisory Committee of BIREME shall be made up of designated Members with the following composition:
 - a. two (2) permanent members: one (1) appointed by the Representative of the Government of Brazil and one (1) by the Director of PAHO;
 - b. five (5) nonpermanent members, selected and named by the Directing Council of PAHO from among the BIREME membership described in Article IV, taking geographical representation into account.

2. The nonpermanent members of the BIREME Advisory Committee should be rotated every three (3) years. However, the Directing Council of PAHO shall be able to indicate a shorter rotation period in cases where it is necessary to maintain balance among the members of the Advisory Committee.
3. The number of nonpermanent members of the Advisory Committee may be modified by the Directing Council of PAHO as new BIREME Members are admitted.
4. The BIREME Advisory Committee shall:
 - a. make recommendations to the Director of PAHO regarding the programmatic functions of BIREME, based on PAHO's Regional Strategic Plan and Technical Cooperation Work Plan and on recommendations from the Members of BIREME's Scientific Committee;
 - b. review the proposal for BIREME's Biennial Work Plan and make recommendations to the Director of PAHO aimed at strengthening and developing national and regional capacity and infrastructure in scientific and technical information;
 - c. review BIREME's Biennial Budget Proposal and make recommendations to the Director of PAHO to strengthen the financing structure;
 - d. propose the annual quota contributions of Participating States and Participating Organizations;
 - e. evaluate BIREME's international cooperation with other regions and make recommendations to the Director of PAHO for its improvement;
 - f. recommend to the Director of PAHO, providing justification, that the number of Nonpermanent Members on the Advisory Committee be modified to maintain geographical balance;
 - g. appoint the members of BIREME's Scientific Committee;
 - h. recommend to the Directing Council of PAHO, when necessary, amendments to this Statute;
 - i. recommend to the Director of PAHO the creation of technical committees and working groups to assist BIREME in performing its programmatic functions, executing the Work Plan, and addressing health sector priorities;

- j. adopt internal Rules of Procedure to be approved by all its Members in regular session;
- k. hold an annual regular session. Members of the Advisory Committee may request that the Director of PAHO convene special sessions.

Article VII Scientific Committee

The Scientific Committee is a permanent body of BIREME and performs advisory functions for the Director of PAHO and the Advisory Committee.

1. The Scientific Committee shall consist of at least five international specialists, named for their recognized expertise in scientific research, health information and knowledge management, and scientific and technical communication in health and their knowledge in the areas of research, ethics, development, operations, and financing. Members of the Scientific Committee shall be appointed as specialists and rotated every three (3) years.
2. The members of the Scientific Committee shall be appointed by BIREME's Advisory Committee, taking into account the thematic diversity and expertise necessary for the Scientific Committee to perform its functions. Member States of BIREME may each nominate up to two experts, and the Director of PAHO may nominate additional experts, to be included in the list of international experts from which such appointments will be made, also paying due regard to the thematic diversity and expertise necessary for the Scientific Committee to perform its functions.
3. The Scientific Committee shall:
 - a. make recommendations to the Advisory Committee on BIREME's programmatic functions based on the international state-of-the-art in scientific information and communication, which shall include: policies and quality criteria for the selection of content; management of information, knowledge, and scientific evidence; publication management; information storage and retrieval infrastructure; bibliometrics; infometrics; and science metrics;
 - b. advise the Director of PAHO and the Advisory Committee on the methodologies and technologies used by BIREME for the management of information products and services, and recommend the solutions and upgrades needed;
 - c. advise the Director of PAHO and the Advisory Committee on the adoption of innovations in scientific information and communication;

- d. advise the Director of PAHO and the Advisory Committee on the preparation and implementation of BIREME's Biennial Work Plan, in keeping with the PAHO Strategic Plan and Biennial Work Plan;
- e. advise the Director of PAHO and the Advisory Committee on the adoption of international partnerships for the development of health science information and communication;
- f. adopt internal Rules of Procedure to be approved by all its Members in regular session;
- g. hold an annual regular session. Three (3) members of this Scientific Committee may request BIREME's Advisory Committee to hold special sessions.

Article VIII Secretariat

Subject to the general authority and decisions of the Director of PAHO, the Secretariat is a permanent body of BIREME, responsible for the technical and administrative management and execution of BIREME's Biennial Work Plan and Budget, pursuant to PAHO regulations and standards.

1. The Secretariat shall be comprised of the Director of BIREME and the necessary technical and administrative personnel, as determined by the Director of PAHO and subject to the availability of financial resources.
2. The Director of BIREME shall be appointed by the Director of PAHO, through an international competition, pursuant to the rules and regulations of PAHO.
3. Staff members who hold positions in BIREME shall be appointed pursuant to the rules and regulations of PAHO.
4. The Director of BIREME shall be responsible to the Director of PAHO for the executive management of BIREME, pursuant to PAHO rules and regulations. Responsibilities include:
 - a. prepare, based on PAHO's Regional Strategic Plan, the Proposal for BIREME's Biennial Work Plan and Biennial Budgetary Proposal and submit them to the Advisory Committee for review and recommendations from the Director of PAHO;
 - b. executing Biennial Work Plan and Biennial Budget of BIREME approved by the Director of PAHO as an integral part of PAHO's Biennial Work Plan;

- c. promoting and establishing collaboration with entities and organizations connected with BIREME's programmatic functions;
- d. promoting and forging international partnerships for the development of health science information and communication, in keeping with PAHO priorities;
- e. representing BIREME at events and in initiatives relevant to its programmatic functions as a Specialized Center of PAHO;
- f. manage BIREME's administrative and financial affairs;
- g. present an annual progress report on BIREME and submit it to the Advisory Committee for review and recommendations to the Director of PAHO;
- h. prepare any other report requested by the Director of PAHO, the Advisory Committee, or the Scientific Committee of BIREME;
- i. serve as the Secretary *ex officio* at meetings of the Advisory Committee and Scientific Committee;
- j. accept funds or contributions from individuals or corporations through agreements and/or contracts, as related to BIREME's functions, subject to the conditions established by the Director of PAHO and with his prior written authorization.

Article IX Finance

1. Resources for funding BIREME's Biennial Work Plan shall be obtained from the following sources: the annual contribution from PAHO determined by the Director of PAHO; the annual contribution from the Government of Brazil, pursuant to the agreement signed with PAHO; annual contributions from the Participating States and Participating Organizations of BIREME, and financial resources from projects, sale of services, and voluntary contributions.
2. All annual contributions shall be due on 1 January of each year and are to be paid by 30 June of the same year at the latest.
3. BIREME funds and assets shall be treated as PAHO trust funds and administered pursuant to PAHO's financial regulations.
4. A Working Capital Fund shall be established on behalf of BIREME in accordance with PAHO's rules and regulations.

Article X Privileges and Immunities

The privileges and immunities granted to BIREME in Brazil as a Specialized Center of PAHO, as well as the financial responsibilities of the Government of Brazil in regard to the maintenance of BIREME in Article IX of this Statute, should be reflected in a specific agreement between PAHO and the Government of Brazil.

Article XI Amendments

Amendments to this Statute, as recommended by the BIREME Advisory Committee, shall enter into force on approval by the Directing Council of PAHO.

Article XII Entry into Force

The provisions of this Statute shall enter into force on the date of its approval by the Directing Council of PAHO.

Report on the Financial and Administrative Implications of the Proposed Resolution for PASB

1. Agenda item: 5.7 - Amendments to the Statute of the Latin American and Caribbean enter on Health Sciences Information (BIREME)

2. Linkage to [Program Budget of the Pan American Health Organization 2022–2023](#):

Outcome 20: Integrated information systems for health. Integrated information systems for health developed and implemented with strengthened capacities in Member States and the Pan American Sanitary Bureau

Outcome 21: Data, information, knowledge, and evidence. Increased capacity of Member States and the Pan American Sanitary Bureau to generate, analyze, and disseminate health evidence and translate knowledge for decision making at national and subnational levels

Outcome 22: Research, ethics, and innovation for health. Strengthened research and innovation to generate solutions and evidence to improve health and reduce health inequalities

3. Financial implications:

- a) **Total estimated cost for implementation over the lifecycle of the resolution (including staff and activities):** US\$ 20,000.
- b) **Estimated cost for the 2022–2023 biennium (including staff and activities):** US\$ 20,000.
- c) **Of the estimated cost noted in b), what can be subsumed under existing programmed activities?**
All the resources will be subsumed under existing programmed activities.

4. Administrative implications:

- a) **Indicate the levels of the Organization at which the work will be undertaken:**
The Office of the Legal Counsel, the PAHO/WHO Representative Office in Brazil, and the Director of BIREME with the support of its Department of Administration.
- b) **Additional staffing requirements (indicate additional required staff full-time equivalents, noting necessary skills profile):** No additional full-time staff requirements.
- c) **Time frames (indicate broad time frames for the implementation and evaluation):**
The operation of BIREME under its amended Statute is expected to be fully in place by the end of the biennium 2024–2025.

Analytical Form to Link Agenda Item with Organizational Mandates

1. **Agenda item:** 5.7 - Amendments to the Statute of the Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information (BIREME)
2. **Responsible unit:** Office of the Legal Counsel (PASB) / Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information (BIREME)
3. **Preparing officer:** Heidi Jimenez, Legal Counsel / João Paulo Souza, Director of BIREME
4. **Link between Agenda item and the [Sustainable Health Agenda for the Americas 2018–2030](#):**
 Goal 6: Strengthen information systems for health to support the development of evidence-based policies and decision-making
 Goal 7: Develop capacity for the generation, transfer, and use of evidence and knowledge in health, promoting research and innovation, and the use of technology
5. **Link between Agenda item and the [Strategic Plan of the Pan American Health Organization 2020–2025](#):**
Outcome 20: Integrated information systems for health
Outcome 21: Data, information, knowledge, and evidence
Outcome 22: Research, ethics, and innovation for health
6. **List of collaborating centers and national institutions linked to this Agenda item:**
 BIREME coordinates the Virtual Health Library (VHL) network, which involves the participation of most countries in the Region with more than 2,000 institutions directly related with the production, intermediation and use of scientific and technical information, knowledge and evidence. These institutions are linked to the national research, educational and healthcare systems and cooperate with the VHL products, services and events through their libraries, documentation and information centers, scientific journal editorials, information systems, etc.
7. **Best practices in this area and examples from countries within the Region of the Americas:**
 Cooperative production and networking of scientific and technical information products, services and events as national, regional and global public goods. Hundreds of institutions follow the same methodologies, standards and technologies, which allow multilingual operation, and are aligned with the international state of the art. BIREME's networking approach has contributed to increase the visibility, accessibility, quality, use and impact of the scientific and technical information generated in the Region and has contributed to the development of national capacity and infrastructure to collect, organize, preserve, publish, disseminate and evaluate national, regional and international scientific and technical literature.
 The VHL, a model for information management developed and coordinated regionally by BIREME with the support of Latin American and Caribbean countries is recognized as a good practice in the 4th volume of the publication Good Practices in South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation.