
Abstracts and Reports



Summit of the Americas and Its Follow-up: PAHO's Role

The Summit of the Americas, held in Miami on 9–11 December 1994, brought together the leaders of 34 Western Hemisphere countries. The Summit marked the first meeting of the Region's Heads of State since the Punta del Este (Uruguay) conference in 1963 and provided a starting point for inter-American relations in the twenty-first century.

Working sessions were conducted on achieving economic integration and trade liberalization, ensuring sustainable development, and strengthening democratic institutions. In addition to the discussions of the Heads of State, the First Ladies held a special symposium on issues related to children's well-being on 10 December. Sir George Alleyne, Director (then Director-elect) of the Pan American Health Organization, was the keynote speaker at that symposium, with a presentation entitled "The Development of Our Children: The Health and Education Dimension."

PAHO was actively involved in preparations for the Summit, promoting the inclusion of health as a featured topic for discussion. The Organization participated in extensive consultations with the

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on matters related to the general area of health and with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) on environmental matters. Follow-up to the Summit, as outlined in the Plan of Action that was adopted by the Heads of State, also calls for the explicit involvement of PAHO as well as other inter-American organizations.

This report summarizes the commitments made by the governments at the Summit in the areas relevant to PAHO's work and describes the role of PAHO in some of the currently programmed follow-up activities.

SUMMIT OUTCOMES

The wide-ranging themes covered at the Summit were distilled into a declaration of principles, with the title "Partnership for Development and Prosperity: Democracy, Free Trade, and Sustainable Development in the Americas." This document communicates the context and purposes of the Summit, affirming four overall goals: to preserve and strengthen the community of democracies in the Americas, to promote prosperity through economic integration and free trade, to eradicate poverty and discrimination in the Hemisphere, and to guarantee sustainable development and conserve the natural environment for future generations.

Source: Pan American Health Organization, Office of External Relations. Implications of the Summit of the Americas for the Pan American Health Organization. Washington, DC: PAHO; 17 March 1995. (Document SPP24/8, Rev. 1).

The Plan of Action adopted at the Summit contains 23 initiatives grouped under these four broad categories. The initiatives spell out concrete activities to be undertaken and call on the appropriate institutions for support.

Health Initiative

Under the category "eradicating poverty and discrimination in our Hemisphere," one of the initiatives deals with ensuring equitable access to basic health services. Within this initiative, the governments endorsed the maternal and child health objectives of the 1990 World Summit for Children, the 1994 Nariño Accord, and the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development. They also reaffirmed their commitment to reduce child mortality by at least one-third of the 1990 level and maternal mortality by at least one-half of that level by the year 2000.

The governments also endorsed a basic package of clinical, preventive, and public health services consistent with WHO, PAHO, and World Bank recommendations and with the Program of Action agreed to at the International Conference on Population and Development. The basic package consists of child, maternal, and reproductive health interventions, including prenatal, delivery, and postnatal care, family planning information and services, and HIV/AIDS prevention, as well as immunizations and programs to combat the other major causes of infant mortality.

In order to ensure universal, nondiscriminatory access to basic services, the countries made a commitment to develop or update national action plans or programs of reforms to achieve child, maternal, and reproductive health goals. Reforms will encompass providing essential community-based services for the poor, the disabled, and indigenous groups;

strengthening public health infrastructure; finding alternative means of financing, managing, and providing services; assuring quality; and encouraging greater involvement of community resources and nongovernmental organizations.

The initiative also calls for a special meeting of hemispheric governments with interested donors and international technical agencies—to be hosted by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank, and PAHO—to establish the framework for health reform mechanisms and to plan ways to strengthen the health reform efforts of the Inter-American Network on Health Economics and Financing. The latter is a network of government officials, scholars, and representatives of the private sector that serves as an international forum for sharing technical expertise, information, and experience.

In addition, the governments are committed to using the opportunity of the annual meeting of the PAHO Directing Council to develop a program to combat endemic and communicable diseases as well as to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, with the participation of IDB and donors.

Environmental Initiative

One of the initiatives under the category "guaranteeing sustainable development and conserving our natural environment for future generations" calls for a partnership for pollution prevention. The participants made a commitment to strengthen and build technical and institutional capacity to address environmental priorities such as control of pesticides, reduction of lead contamination, pollution prevention, waste and sanitation issues, improvement of water and air quality, and urban environmental problems.

The countries pledged to work to strengthen legal frameworks for national environmental protection as well as compliance and enforcement mechanisms, and to include sustainability criteria and objectives in development strategies. They supported the adoption of governmental mechanisms to provide for public participation—particularly from members of indigenous and other affected communities—in the design and enforcement of environmental laws and in the consideration of policies on the environmental impact of development projects.

The governments will identify priorities for possible international collaboration and will convene a meeting of technical experts, designated by each interested country, to develop a framework for cooperation, building on existing institutions and networks. Initial projects will focus on the health and environmental problems associated with misuse of pesticides and the effects of lead contamination (from gasoline and other sources). Organizations such as PAHO, OAS, multilateral development banks, and appropriate nongovernmental organizations will be enlisted to finance, develop, and implement priority projects.

Other aspects of the initiative include commitments to develop environmental policies and laws to help ensure that economic integration of the Region occurs in an environmentally sustainable manner; to establish mechanisms for cooperation among government agencies in order to facilitate the exchange of environmental information, technological cooperation, and capacity-building; and to develop internationally compatible environmental laws and regulations and promote implementation of international environmental agreements.

The governments will discuss progress on these international and national activities at the Summit Conference on Sus-

tainable Development, to be held in Bolivia in 1996, and at subsequent annual sustainable development meetings at the ministerial level.

SUMMIT FOLLOW-UP

While primary responsibility for implementation of the Plan of Action rests with the governments and societies of the countries, the Plan calls upon existing organizations to assist in implementing the package of initiatives.

The public and private sectors are expected to collaborate on a number of initiatives. Those most relevant to health are the two outlined above (equitable access to basic health services, partnership for pollution prevention) and the follow-up to the Symposium on the Children of the Americas. Health concerns also play a part in such joint private-public sector activities as preventing drug trafficking, strengthening democracy, and invigorating society/community participation.

Role of PAHO

As part of its contribution and follow-up, PAHO is undertaking several activities internally and in consultation with USAID, USEPA, IDB, and the World Bank.

Health Initiative Activities

In promotion of health sector reform, PAHO will host the Conference of Ministers of Health and Finance on Health Reform Mechanisms in Washington, D.C., on 29–30 September 1995. The Conference will focus primarily on health care financing and organization of health services, and it will review sectoral reform mechanisms, support for national reform plans, and strengthening of the Inter-American Network on Health Economics and Financing, among other top-

ics. It will also define the role of PAHO in monitoring the implementation of country plans and programs to carry out the reform process throughout the Region. In preparation for the Conference, a task force consisting of representatives from IDB, PAHO, and the World Bank has been formed. In addition, a preparatory meeting of several ministers of health is scheduled for late June, coinciding with their attendance at PAHO's Executive Committee meeting. Several subregional meetings of health ministers will also take place before the Conference, and a technical meeting of the cosponsoring parties took place in May.

Regarding AIDS, PAHO has, in the context of the new Joint United Nations Program on AIDS, prepared a regional plan of action for AIDS control, to be discussed with other regional and UN agencies, as well as with the multilateral banks and bilateral cooperation agencies. The plan and the promotional efforts that will be carried out in the next few months to support the countries will be presented and discussed at the PAHO Directing Council meeting in September 1995.

In activities related to maternal and child health arising from the Summit, PAHO has met with USAID and the Office of the First Lady to devise an agenda of concrete activities in preparation for the Meeting of First Ladies scheduled for October 1995 in Paraguay. PAHO will also be the lead agency of the health task force organized to prepare and monitor plans for the measles elimination and maternal mortality reduction programs.

Environmental Initiative Activities

At the Summit, PAHO signed a Memorandum of Understanding with USEPA. The agreement "recognize[s] the importance of environmental protection to the health and well-being of present and future generations of the Western Hemisphere." The two organizations declared that they wished to share and exchange expertise, knowledge, and resources to promote technical cooperation on environmental and health issues. As a result of the Memorandum of Understanding, two USEPA employees have been seconded to PAHO to collaborate on projects concerning air quality and environmental health information.

PAHO will continue collaboration with USEPA and other governmental, non-governmental, and international organizations to implement portions of the partnership for pollution prevention. Activities will include development of two projects, one to phase out lead from gasoline and another to promote safer use of pesticides. Both these projects will involve several countries. PAHO will work with IDB to seek seed funding for these initiatives. PAHO has also participated in two conferences on lead contamination, one in Washington, D.C., cosponsored with USEPA, and the other in Mexico.

Preparations for the Pan American Conference on Health, Environment, and Sustainable Human Development, with the cosponsorship of the World Bank, IDB, and OAS, are under way. The Conference is scheduled to take place in Washington, D.C., on 1-3 October 1995.

