

PAHO'S GROWTH IN A TIME OF CRISIS¹

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I believe it is important to insist that the world's current economic, political, and social crisis has much deeper roots than many had previously thought, and that recent developments have only confirmed our forecast about the impact it would have on the work of our Organization and, in a broader sense, on international cooperation. I'm going to mention just two particular events serving as expressions of this type of pressure—as demonstrations of the danger to which we are exposed. You all know that the United States Congress—both the House of Representatives and the Senate—has approved a special law requiring the United States Government to reduce its contribution to the United Nations System from 25% to 20%, beginning in the fiscal year 1987. This reduction, which in relative terms means a 20% decrease in the United States quota, will not be made if the United Nations System adopts two measures which, in my opinion, cannot be implemented before September 1986.

The first of these measures is to bring the staff salaries, wages, and benefits of international agencies into line with those of the Federal Civil Service of the United States. The second is to adopt a system of weighted voting on all budgetary and financial operations of all United Nations agencies, such that the weighting of the vote would be proportional to the contribution of each member state.

The United States Congress made only one exception to the application of this general rule. This was not an exception for a particular agency, but rather for agencies of the Inter-American System. Technically, PAHO does not come within the compass of that system. However, the members of the Joint Committee of the House of Representatives and Senate specifically stated that the consequences for the Pan American Health Organization as part of the World Health Organization that arise from the application of this law should be directly compensated to our Organization.

With respect to pressures on the United Nations System, PAHO appears to be in a favorable position. The proposal of the United States Congress to explicitly exclude the Organization from the consequences of the special legislation is convincing evidence of that. In this case, we were able to convince the legislators that this Organization has a special character and therefore warrants special treatment. However, the attitude evident in this one case cannot be assumed to prevail generally.

As you know, we recently held a meeting of the chief Governing Body of the Pan American Health Organization, the Directing Council. This year the Council had to

¹From an address presented at a general meeting of the PAHO headquarters staff held in Washington, D.C., on 7 October 1985.

discuss and approve the Organization's proposed budget for 1986-1987 and the projections for 1988-1989. Great care was taken in preparing the budget proposal. It was repeatedly discussed with each of the principal contributing countries, not only in meetings of the Special Subcommittee on Planning of the PAHO Executive Committee, but also in the Executive Committee itself and directly with each one of the national authorities involved.

Despite all efforts taken to adjust the budget to the critical situation our Region is confronting, we encountered difficulties. Three of the principal contributors proposed to the Directing Council that the Organization's resources in the regular PAHO budget be maintained at the 1984-1985 level. In effect, this would have meant a budget reduction of approximately 9.1% (about US\$10 million) for 1986-1987.

As a result of support based on firm appreciation of the Organization's significance and the efforts being made to take specific steps, this proposal was not accepted. Nevertheless, the very fact that it was discussed, and that a number of basic principles were appealed to in the process, provides a warning confirming earlier forecasts and expectations. More than that, it confirms the need to bolster the excellence of our Organization by further increasing PAHO's efficiency—and in the process making PAHO clearly and obviously essential to its member countries. That is the best way of dealing with this type of situation.

At the same time, it should be noted that aside from this one question that arose during discussion of the budget and was resolved, relations between the Organization and its Governing Bodies have been excellent—with expressions of confidence in the direction the Organization is taking being virtually unanimous. The same applies to PAHO's direct relations with its member countries, and I would say that at the policy level those relations are exceptional.

In a similar vein, relationships with other agencies have continued to improve. Among the many agencies with which we have been working most satisfactorily are the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). With these five agencies, among others, we have been able to develop and increase the extent of our cooperation. Because of this, we now believe that in the period 1986-1987 PAHO's extrabudgetary resources will almost equal its regular budgetary resources. The latest estimate of the extrabudgetary resources available for that period is approximately US\$90 million.

In the field of technical cooperation we have made some recent progress. Special initiatives like the one for Central America (at present considered to be PAHO's principal technical cooperation project) have proceeded normally. Of course, such projects are rarely free from setbacks, problems, and errors; so the important thing is that we, together with the governments involved, have been able to learn from our errors and to keep the Central American and other initiatives moving forward.

The Central American plan has also affirmed the validity of using an approach that groups countries together by subregion. This had led us to employ similar approaches in the English-speaking Caribbean and the Andean Region and, at the request of the countries themselves, to discuss matters of common interest to the Southern Cone nations. This latter development is especially encouraging, because one sign that technical cooperation is proceeding satisfactorily is willingness of the countries themselves to take the lead in asking that PAHO promote projects of this kind.

On 14 May 1985, with the participation of many member countries and the support of all, we proposed the goal of eradicating wild poliovirus from the Americas by 1990. This new way of dealing with an old challenge demonstrated the Organization's tremendous capacity for mobilizing cooperative efforts.

Indeed, a few months after that announcement was made and less than two weeks after our Directing Council approved the pertinent plan of action, we could say that the resources needed to conduct the initiative were almost committed. That is, the additional US\$45 million needed to support the program were virtually assured—even before the plan of action began operating. At the same time, the material, technical, and financial support required had been guaranteed by institutions of various types, including private institutions like Rotary International and bilateral institutions like USAID. In addition, the initiative was being supported by the Inter-American Development Bank, not through loans but rather through non-reimbursable grants, and, of course, by international agencies such as PAHO itself and UNICEF.

All of this has demonstrated confidence in the Organization's ability to propose ideas, take on challenges, and coordinate necessary activities. It has also provided an opportunity to strengthen work directed at other goals of the Expanded Program on Immunization. And, beyond that, it seems destined to strengthen the permanent infrastructure of the participating countries' health services, a development that can help to ensure ongoing achievement of desired results.

During this period we have also undertaken, although not as rapidly as one might wish, a concentrated effort to strengthen the Organization's basic production units, our field offices in the member countries. In this vein, many training activities have been provided for country representatives and field office personnel, and we hope to conduct additional specific programs providing this type of training in the future.

One of the most important measures for extending the Organization's capacity and helping it to ward off threats arising from the global crisis is what we have called "mobilization of national resources." What this means is helping member countries to help themselves through the identification, mobilization, and proper utilization of the existing resources within their own borders, and also establishing a basis for intercountry cooperation. Recognizing the importance of such action, we have set up administrative mechanisms designed to promote that type of mobilization, and while we are still far from our objective, many units within the Organization have moved ahead in that direction.

In this regard, we must be aware that to continue working in a traditional way, solely with our regular staff plus outside consultants hired in the usual manner, while at the same time trying to sustain the Organization's regular activities through the conventional mechanisms for cooperation, would be the equivalent of committing suicide. That is because this would progressively require such a large proportion of the regular funds earmarked for salaries and other direct staff costs as to produce virtual paralysis.

In addition, we need to recognize that the Organization must confront new challenges. I refer in particular to chronic degenerative diseases; the problems involved in providing health services to urban areas; and the obstacles to providing secondary and tertiary health care under systems oriented to primary care. These and other future challenges must be faced with the same amount of regular resources we have now. Hence, the only way of ensuring the Organization's continued usefulness to the countries in these areas is to innovate—that is, to create new ways of working that will enable us to increase the

Organization's capacity while at the same time sustaining its conventional role in other fields.

We thus hope by mobilizing national resources, while maintaining our regular staff at its present level, that we can help mobilize many more people in the technical and institutional fields at the same time as financial resources are being activated and the capacity to provide care is being multiplied a few or (since it costs nothing to dream) many times. This entails a mobilization of desires, of people, and of institutions, together with coordination of the resources existing in the member countries.



Regarding other aspects of PAHO's current work, I would like to point out certain things that warrant special attention. In the area of technical cooperation, we need a stricter and more appropriate definition of PAHO's priorities and a broader and more comprehensive development of the Organization's management strategies. We also need to keep improving the planning and programming system, evaluation of technical programs and cooperation programs in each country, and the level of individual and collective performance in each of our constituent units.

We must also keep introducing innovations into the ways the available resources are used, so as to increase the Organization's capacity for cooperation—be it through national resource mobilization, decentralization and revision of some administrative systems (especially with respect to the Pan American Centers), procurement of extra-budgetary funds, mobilization of political resources to support the Organization, or even engagement of each national population's social resources.

It should also be mentioned that among the recent and current events in which the Organization is participating, four meetings have special significance. These, in chronological order, are as follows:

- The 20-26 October Meeting on Primary Care in Santiago, Chile, is expected to review what the primary care strategy means in the Region of the Americas and to define how that strategy can be converted into an important instrument for the transformation of health service systems as a whole, including elements providing secondary and tertiary care. Consequently, we have assigned the event very special priority; over 40 of our own staff members and about 100 national officials will attend this meeting.

- On 25-27 November 1985, the government of Spain will sponsor a meeting of governments and cooperation agencies in Madrid to discuss support of the Plan of Priority Needs for Central America and Panama. All the governments of Western Europe and North America (those of Canada and the United States), and most probably the government of Japan, will be represented at that meeting. In other words, the governments of all the large countries that can really support that initiative will be present, in addition to those of the nations of Central America and Panama and the countries of the Contadora Group.

- During the first week of December 1985, the annual meeting of country representatives will be held here at PAHO Headquarters in Washington, D.C. This time, not only the representatives from Latin America but also those from the English-speaking areas will attend. Together with members of the headquarters staff, they will review problems affecting our cooperation with the countries and ways of harmonizing the programs that will be operating in 1986.

● During the second week of December, the PAHO Executive Committee's Subcommittee on Planning will meet to deal with a number of important topics. Among other things, the role of the Governing Bodies will be discussed, as will the system for planning, programming, and evaluating the work of the Organization as a whole.

I would also like to say that after two and a half years at the head of this Organization, I have many reasons to feel satisfaction, and far fewer to feel discontent. In the first place, I feel that I have received the support of the great majority of staff members—support that goes far beyond what is required by post descriptions or contracts and that arises from an understanding of the nature of our activities and of the commitment and dedication with which they must be carried out. This does not mean that we have not made mistakes. The very fact that we are committed to our Organization and to its mission means that we need to be innovative and creative; it means taking the lead, and taking the lead always entails the risk of making mistakes. But what is important is that we should do things in order to succeed, that we should learn from our mistakes, and that we should learn together.

I have also had the privilege of receiving the unfailing support of our member governments. On each occasion when I have had a need to discuss policy problems with the governments, solutions to these problems have usually been found. Sometimes these were not ideal solutions, but they were generally the best and most appropriate that could be devised in the face of prevailing circumstances. As this suggests, the difficulties encountered thus far in creating new forms of work and increasing the Organization's ability to mobilize national resources and incorporate them into the joint effort to solve health problems have not been political difficulties. Indeed, the extent of the political support the Organization has received has gone beyond that which we have been able to utilize in full.

Whenever we have spoken about PAHO's future, I have mentioned the need for change in the way the Organization has cooperated with the countries during its 83 years of existence. Change is necessary because the situation in the countries themselves is always changing. This change, when expressed in terms of resources—above all resources for technical cooperation—increasingly requires the Organization to play the role of an instrument for identifying and mobilizing the resources that exist in the countries themselves and of helping the countries to use those resources efficiently within their borders, while at the same time helping to construct an important base of national resources for intercountry cooperation. When I first became Director, I pointed to the "administration of knowledge" as one of the fundamental parts of the Organization's mission at the operational level. In terms of mobilization of resources, this is what we are talking about. Therefore, the Organization must increasingly mobilize appropriate people, institutions, and financial, scientific, and human resources. What is involved is not only resources in the intrinsic sense of the word—that is, people, money, and institutions—but also another type of resource, namely scientific knowledge itself.

Such mobilization can be visualized by imagining that PAHO's resources (about 400 professional posts for technical cooperation) are represented by a circle with a specific diameter. That circle cannot be expected to grow much in the near future, or even by the year 2000, if we limit ourselves to the resources attainable within the United Nations System and exclude the resources of the various existing centers at the national level. Rather, that circle could be expected to stay about the same size or shrink a little. But if PAHO acts to enhance mobilization of the member countries' financial,

technical, and political resources as well as intercountry and other resources, it can effectively enlarge that circle 10 times or more.

I am referring here specifically to additional resources incorporated into PAHO's cooperation activities. Many believe that such resources are not capable of performing tasks in the field of cooperation; but in fact a good part of the Organization's cooperation has already been provided through what are known as short-term consultants and other "outside" resources. What we wish to do with those outside resources that can be mobilized bears no precise relation to any specific time or project. Rather, we want to establish channels whereby PAHO can mobilize a specified amount of those resources, and so will have a permanent relationship with those resources. That does not mean that additional manpower resources will be contracted by the Organization. Using extra-budgetary or regular funds to recruit personnel is one way of mobilizing resources, but it is not the most important.

Far more important, for example, is the establishment of "cooperation networks," that link national institutions in a joint effort to provide the countries with cooperation or that undertake specific research or technological development activities. It is also important for the member countries—not only the governments but also the universities—to provide personnel to work within the Organization. Recent initiatives encouraging this practice include the residency being established in international health and the young professionals program underway at the Pan American Center for Sanitary Engineering and Environmental Sciences (CEPIS). Hence, we are using a variety of mechanisms, such as contracts outside the United Nations System, rather than a single mechanism.

In this vein, it should be emphasized that the relationship of the Organization with those resources that can be mobilized is seen as a continuous, long-term relationship rather than an interrupted or short-term one. To cite an example, one of PAHO's guiding bodies is the Advisory Committee on Medical Research. In the past, this committee met once a year and then waited for a year before meeting again to continue its discussions. We therefore suggested that the committee become integrated into the life of the Organization by working with it continuously rather than three to five days a year, that it serve among other things as a link with scientific research centers in each country, and that it help to create a much larger group of research workers or research managers, say about 100 persons linked to many institutions. We also suggested that ways be found to enable each of the 15 regular members of the advisory committee to act on behalf of the Organization in mobilizing those experts, to help us carry out our research program, and to help the countries develop their research policies and plans. These suggestions were enthusiastically received and the committee is on the way to becoming an excellent mechanism for cooperation along these lines.

The fact that we are creating mechanisms of this kind demonstrates that we are a dynamic organization. We are not a passive bureaucracy that spends its time signing papers and hiring consultants to prepare studies whose findings are not used. We are not too far from being an organization that is part of the daily life of the countries it serves in all areas and all places; an organization integrated into the life of the peoples and societies of this Region; and one that talks, discusses, and works together with its member governments on a continuing basis.

This is the organization I envisage, one that can escape the restrictions of those things that presently keep us within the scope of the small circle referred to earlier. Let us not forget the pressures that have prevented us from increasing our regular

resources and have been causing our budget to grow smaller. It is easy to imagine that if the 1985 Directing Council Meeting had approved a 9.5% reduction in our regular budget, today I would be announcing the elimination of 150 regular posts. What prevented this was not the existence of those posts, but the prestige the Organization enjoys in the countries served. To sustain that prestige, we must change, forget trivialities, innovate, emerge from our shell, grow wings, and learn to fly. In other words, we must become more capable, more efficient, and more creative. We have the potential to do these things, and I firmly believe that we will do them. So I would ask everyone involved to participate actively in the work of making our Organization grow—not simply because we want it to grow but because the countries have need for it to grow, and the people of the Americas have need for it to grow—especially people in Latin America and the Caribbean whose members are suffering and dying every day for lack of adequate public health measures. For, in the final analysis, our highest responsibility is to them.