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C. SUBREGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Introduction

1. The purpose of this report is to inform Member States of relevant developments since the last report presented in 2015 with regard to public health-related agreements and resolutions in the framework of subregional integration processes, which are of interest to the Governing Bodies of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

2. This report also covers the progress made in activities carried out as part of cooperation agreements between PAHO and subregional integration entities.

3. The framework for subregional technical cooperation is supported by Resolution CD45.R6, adopted by the Directing Council in 2004. With the adoption of this resolution, subregional technical cooperation was included in the budget policy in order to promote the strengthening of PAHO's collaboration in integration processes in three subregions: Central America, the Caribbean, and South America.

4. Through the signing of specific agreements and memoranda of understanding, PAHO currently provides technical cooperation to the subregional integration processes mentioned below. This report includes a table showing the new developments and progress made in the implementation of priority resolutions emanating from these integration processes, their relation to PAHO activities, and the measures that the Organization has supported.

a) Central America

- Central American Integration System (SICA): Council of Ministers of Health of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMISCA)
 - Meeting of the Health Sector of Central America and the Dominican Republic (RESSCAD)
 - The Mesoamerican Integration and Development Project
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b) Caribbean

- Caribbean Community (CARICOM): Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD)

c) South America

- Andean Community: Andean Health Agency/Hipólito Unanue Agreement (ORAS/CONHU)
- Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR): Meeting of Ministers of Health of MERCOSUR and Working Subgroup on Health No. 11 (SGT 11)
- Union of South American Nations (UNASUR): South American Health Council
- Pacific Alliance: Council of Vice Ministers of Health
- Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO)
- Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA)

Integration Entities in Central America*Central American Integration System (SICA)-COMISCA¹*

COMISCA		
Technical and political forum	PAHO-related agreements and resolutions	Subregional impact and progress
43rd meeting of COMISCA (December 2015)	Approval of the Health Plan for Central America and the Dominican Republic 2016-2020	The Health Plan for Central America and the Dominican Republic 2016-2020 is fully aligned with the PAHO Strategic Plan 2014-2019. Both plans were the framework for the preparation of PAHO's Subregional Biennial Work Plan 2016-2017 for this subregion.
	San Salvador Declaration: "Towards equity and social justice through a regional approach to the social determinants of health"	Member States committed politically to include a determinants of health approach in all SICA policies and to carry out studies and analyses of the determinants of health to develop policies oriented toward justice, equity, and social cohesion.

¹ Link to information on SICA: <http://www.sica.int/>.

COMISCA		
Technical and political forum	PAHO-related agreements and resolutions	Subregional impact and progress
Special Meeting of COMISCA (February 2016)	Approval of the Subregional Plan for the Prevention and Control of the Zika Virus in Central America and Dominican Republic	The plan is oriented to work among the Member States of SICA on common issues. Multiple subregional plans may create duplication of efforts and competition for scarce resources, including the same target audiences.
44th Meeting of COMISCA (June 2016)	Joint negotiations and procurement of medicines	The joint negotiations resulted in a reduction in prices for some products. Some SICA Member States also use the PAHO Regional Revolving Fund for Strategic Public Health Supplies (Strategic Fund) for various products.
	Support policies, laws and regulations aimed to strengthen breastfeeding	SICA Member States will establish mechanisms for the harmonization of policy, legislative, and regulatory frameworks and prepare a regional initiative to be submitted to PAHO by the pro tempore Presidency of Nicaragua.

RESSCAD²

RESSCAD		
Technical and political forum	PAHO-related agreements and resolutions	Subregional impact and progress
Agreements of the 31st RESSCAD, held 15-16 October 2015 in Tegucigalpa, Honduras	Agreement 1, on the complementary roles between RESSCAD and COMISCA	Member States will continue working under the leadership of Nicaragua as pro tempore president of RESSCAD in the preparation of a policy document defining the role of the two entities. The consultation should include the views of the <i>Foro Centroamericano y República Dominicana de Agua Potable y Saneamiento (FOCARD-APS)</i> and the <i>Consejo de</i>

² Link to information on RESSCAD [in spanish]: <http://www.paho.org/resscad/>.

RESSCAD		
Technical and political forum	PAHO-related agreements and resolutions	Subregional impact and progress
		<i>Instituciones de Seguridad Social de Centroamérica y República Dominicana</i> (CISSCAD), and the proposal should respond to the legal framework of SICA.
	Agreement 3, related to the creation or strengthening of the national regulatory authorities	Member States agreed to implement strategies aimed at the establishment of administrative and economic independent regulatory agencies, according to the respective national legal frameworks.
	Agreement 5, related to the protocol for control of illicit trade of tobacco products	Member States agreed to map the capacities of the countries for developing national plans and to implement activities aimed at sensitizing and promoting political actions for ratification of the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products.
	Agreement 6, related to the strengthening of the International Health Regulations (IHR) core capacities	Member States agreed to participate in WHO meetings to discuss the tools for monitoring and evaluating the capacities of countries for the implementation of the IHR.
	Agreement 7, related to the importance of the regulatory function in the monitoring of pesticide use	Member States agreed to strengthen the technical capacity of staff for monitoring the use of pesticides and to map the existing resources in the subregion for the identification of a reference institution.

*Mesoamerican Integration and Development Project*³

Mesoamerican Integration and Development Project		
Technical and political forum	PAHO-related agreements and resolutions	Subregional impact and progress
Mesoamerican Integration and Development Project	Agreement between PAHO and the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID)	PAHO provided support for the preparation of national plans on malaria, dengue, chikungunya, and Zika virus; road safety; and primary health care.

PAHO Support through the Subregional Integration Process to Address the Zika Virus in Central America

5. In the framework of joint regional actions between the countries of the Central American Integration System (SICA), an extraordinary virtual meeting of Heads of State and Government was held on 2 February 2016 to discuss the Zika virus epidemic and its association with neurological disorders and congenital malformations. It was agreed that COMISCA would develop a plan of action, based primarily on guidelines and resolutions of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Health Regulations (IHR). The Pan American Sanitary Bureau (PASB) Director and the Director of PASB's Department of Communicable Diseases and Health Analysis presented the general guidelines on the response to the epidemic.

6. In this regard, COMISCA, with technical support from the PAHO/WHO Representative Office in Honduras, using these guidelines along with those from the Mesoamerican Master Plan for the Integrated Management, Prevention and Control of Dengue and Chikungunya, and the Integrated Management Strategy for Dengue Prevention and Control (EGI-D), developed the *Plan de acción para la prevención y control del virus Zika en Centroamérica y República Dominicana* [Plan of Action for the Prevention and Control of the Zika Virus in Central America and the Dominican Republic].

Caribbean Integration Entities*CARICOM*⁴

7. The institutional council within CARICOM in which the Ministers of Health meet is the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD). COHSOD is responsible for the promotion of health, education, and living and working conditions in the Caribbean Community.

³ Link to information on the Mesoamerican Integration and Development Project: <http://www.proyectomesoamerica.org/joomla>.

⁴ Link to information on CARICOM: www.caricom.org.

8. The Ministers of Health traditionally meet at PAHO Headquarters just before the Pan American Sanitary Conference or the Directing Council; the most recent Special COHSOD meeting took place on 26-27 September 2015 in Washington, D.C.

9. The Heads of Government of CARICOM met in Placencia, Belize, for the 27th Intersessional Meeting in February 2016. Among the issues discussed was the Zika virus currently affecting the Region. In the 37th Regular Meeting of Heads of Government held in Georgetown, Guyana in July 2016, the issues of NCDs, the *Every Caribbean Girl, Every Caribbean Woman Initiative*, and the regional response to HIV/AIDS were addressed.

CARICOM		
Technical and political forum	PAHO-related agreements and resolutions	Subregional impact and progress
Twenty-eighth Meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development (Health): COHSOD, 26-27 September 2015	Caribbean Cooperation in Health IV	The Caribbean Cooperation in Health (CCH) is the framework that guides public health in the Caribbean Community. CCH III came to an end in 2015, and its evaluation has been completed. The priority action areas for its successor, CCH IV, were developed with the Chief Medical Officers of Health. CCH IV will also inform the development of the PAHO Caribbean Subregional Cooperation Strategy.
	Elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (EMTCT)	PAHO support for the implementation of the Regional Strategy and Plan of Action for the Elimination of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV and Congenital Syphilis includes annual monitoring of progress as well as guiding and coordinating the pre-validation process in collaboration with key partners. To date, eight Caribbean countries have applied to the PASB Director for validation, and an additional 17 have prepared reports that show progress towards the EMTCT targets. A cluster approach for the

CARICOM		
Technical and political forum	PAHO-related agreements and resolutions	Subregional impact and progress
		validation of small countries and territories is being utilized. The United Kingdom Overseas Territories and the Eastern Caribbean States are finalizing their reports with the aim of completing the validation process by June 2016.
	Progress toward Universal Health Coverage: The Noncommunicable Disease Challenge	The meeting highlighted the enormous toll exacted by noncommunicable diseases in the Caribbean and the threat these diseases pose to the achievement of universal access to health and universal health coverage. It recognized the efforts being made by countries towards universal health coverage and emphasized the various actions required to reform the health system to arrive at universal coverage. An evaluation of the Port-of-Spain Declaration has been completed, and the findings will be presented to COHSOD.
	Vaccines and Immunization: Policy Matters: Elimination of Measles and the Introduction of Inactivated Poliovirus Vaccine	There are concerns about the declining immunization coverage and indicators for surveillance of measles, rubella, and polio. Countries that have not yet done so were encouraged to introduce HPV into routine vaccination programs. Additionally, countries were urged to comply with the requirements of the Polio Eradication and Endgame Strategic Plan 2013-2018.
	Regional Health Information System Task Force and its strategic remit	The Caribbean Sub-Regional Health Information System Strengthening Framework has been developed with the support of the PAHO

CARICOM		
Technical and political forum	PAHO-related agreements and resolutions	Subregional impact and progress
		Caribbean Subregional Program Coordination Office. This framework aims to identify the specific components of health information systems that require strengthening in the Caribbean and to define standards and best practices to address them effectively. In collaboration with the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), a Technical Working Group has been established to support its implementation.
	Health systems strengthening	In collaboration with CARPHA, efforts are underway to establish a Technical Working Group to address information systems in health and a Caribbean Regulatory System to address medicines and health technologies regulation. Additionally, CARPHA is working on the establishment of a Caribbean Public Health Laboratory Network.
	International Health Regulations	Member States were urged to adopt the IHR as a tool to support continuous public health preparedness and to become members of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and other relevant international organizations so that they can develop capacities to deal with radio-nuclear and chemical hazards. They were also encouraged to participate in the global IHR Monitoring Framework post-2016.

CARICOM		
Technical and political forum	PAHO-related agreements and resolutions	Subregional impact and progress
27th Intersessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), 16-17 February 2016, Placencia, Belize	Heads of Government declaration on a course of action to address the Zika virus	The Heads of Government agreed on actions that CARICOM Member States would take to confront the Zika virus, including public education and implementation of measures at ports of entry, health facilities, schools, hotels, and tourism facilities. The second week of May is to be designated as Caribbean Mosquito Awareness Week.
37th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM, 4-6 July 2016, Georgetown Guyana	Noncommunicable diseases	The Heads of Government recognized the progress made in addressing the issue of NCDs. They acknowledged that progress was variable and agreed to adopt a more holistic approach.
	Sexual and reproductive health	The <i>Every Caribbean Girl, Every Caribbean Woman Initiative</i> intended to address key sexual and reproductive health concerns such as teenage pregnancy, cervical cancer and the elimination of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV was endorsed.
	HIV and AIDS	Heads of Government noted the 2016 UN Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast-Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and to Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030. They recognized the reduction in external funding to support the regional response to HIV and AIDS, and committed to taking collective advocacy to fill remaining gaps in funding.

PAHO Support through the Subregional Integration Process to Address the Zika Virus in the Caribbean

10. PAHO through its Subregional Program Coordination Office in Barbados has been working on providing risk communication information to CARICOM and CARPHA. The program also sponsored the participation of three intensive care specialists/neurologists from Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago in a study tour at the University Hospital of Martinique from 17 to 18 March 2016, to learn from its experiences in the clinical management of Guillain-Barre Syndrome.

11. The first Caribbean Mosquito Awareness Week was held 9-15 May 2016, as a result of joint collaboration between PAHO, CARPHA, and CARICOM to strengthen existing initiatives and mobilize the public to take action to eliminate mosquito breeding sites in public and private places. PASB provided support for the development of communication materials and a media toolkit.

12. PAHO in collaboration with CARPHA, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Public Health Agency of Canada organized a training workshop for a total of ten laboratory technologists from six countries who are actively involved in Zika surveillance and polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing. Other similar capacity building workshops are being planned in the areas of surveillance for epidemiologists and for obstetrician and neonatal clinicians to review and discuss the new protocols for the clinical management of pregnant women and newborns in the response to the Zika outbreak.

Integration Entities in South America

*Andean Community (CAN)—Andean Health Agency/Hipólito Unanue Agreement (ORAS-CONHU)*⁵

13. As part of the Andean Integration System, the Andean Health Agency/Hipólito Unanue Agreement (ORAS/CONHU) acts as executive secretariat for the Meeting of Ministers of Health of the Andean Area (REMSAA).⁶ PAHO participates in these meetings as the technical advisory agency on health. The most recent REMSAA meeting was held in Cochabamba, Bolivia, on 14 October 2015. The XXXVI REMSAA meeting will be held in Venezuela on a date to be confirmed.

⁵ Link to information on ORAS-CONHU [in spanish]: <http://www.orasconhu.org/>.

⁶ Link to information on REMSAA resolutions [in spanish]: <http://www.orasconhu.org/reuniones-ordinarias>.

ORAS-CONHU		
Technical and political forum	PAHO-related agreements and resolutions	Subregional impact and progress
XXXV REMSAA meeting of 14 October 2015	REMSAA resolution XXXV/496: approval of the Andean Plan for Health in Border Areas 2016-2018 and identification of key partners for implementation	In accordance with the Action Plan on Andean Drug Policy, a proposal on drug access strategies was prepared in the second half of 2014 to be presented at the next REMSAA meeting. Border health is a priority for South America because of the vulnerability of its population. PAHO's subregional work plan in South America has prioritized this issue for the current biennium.
	REMSAA resolution XXXV/497: elimination of rabies transmitted by dogs	Rabies is a neglected zoonotic disease that especially affects communities in the Andean countries with inadequate access to health services. This resolution can support PAHO's initiative to implement the action plan approved by the 49th Directing Council (2009) of PAHO and strengthen the Regional Information System for the Epidemiological Surveillance of Rabies in the Americas (SIRVERA).
	REMSAA resolution XXXV/498: inclusive disaster risk management plan for persons with disabilities	This resolution promotes the use of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) in the Andean countries in order to standardize concepts and criteria and align them with resolutions adopted by the World Health Assembly and the Directing Council of PAHO.
	REMSAA resolution XXXV/499: maternal health (resolution requesting ORAS-CONHU to prepare an Andean plan on maternal health with an intercultural approach)	The Region has recognized the persistent challenge of reducing maternal mortality. In the Andean Area, it is a key challenge considering the region's intercultural diversity.

ORAS-CONHU		
Technical and political forum	PAHO-related agreements and resolutions	Subregional impact and progress
		The PAHO-ORAS partnership can play an important role in addressing this issue.
	REEMSAA resolution XXXV/500: safe blood in the Andean Subregion (resolution requesting that the Andean Technical Committee prepare a subregional plan on safe blood based on PAHO Resolution CD53.R6 [2014])	Universal access to blood transfusions and safe blood products is essential in universal health coverage, and PAHO is promoting the implementation of the 2014-2019 plan of action. The REEMSAA resolution is important for implementation of the regional plan of action in the Andean countries.

Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR):⁷ Meeting of Ministers of Health of MERCOSUR and Working Subgroup on Health No. 11 (SGT 11)

14. Health issues are addressed by Working Subgroup No. 11 (Health) and in the Meeting of Ministers of Health of MERCOSUR and Associated States (the Meeting). The Working Subgroup is a technical body made up of representatives of the States Parties of MERCOSUR. Its main objective is the formulation and harmonization of common regulations in MERCOSUR in each area of jurisdiction. The main objective of the Meeting is to harmonize strategic policies linked with public health and align them with regional priorities, as well as developing plans and programs of action for their joint implementation. The Member States rotate the pro tempore presidency every six months—Paraguay held it in the second half of 2015 and Uruguay in the first half of 2016. Meetings are held in the country that acts as president pro tempore. PAHO participates as the technical advisory agency on health. The last meeting of Ministers of Health of MERCOSUR was held in Montevideo on 17 June 2016 for which the resolutions are being finalized.

MERCOSUR		
Technical and political forum	PAHO-related agreements and resolutions	Subregional impact and progress
Extraordinary meeting of MERCOSUR and Associated States and other Members of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States	Ministerial declaration on diseases transmitted by the <i>Aedes aegypti</i> mosquito: dengue, chikungunya, and Zika virus	Regarding concerns about the threat posed by the Zika virus in Central and South America, the Ministers of Health declared the importance of strengthening vector control and promoting

⁷ Link to information on MERCOSUR: <http://www.mercosur.int/>.

MERCOSUR		
Technical and political forum	PAHO-related agreements and resolutions	Subregional impact and progress
(CELAC), 3 February 2016, Montevideo, Uruguay		South-South cooperation with PAHO's technical support.

*Union of South American Nations (UNASUR)*⁸

15. UNASUR's South American Health Council (CSS) is made up of a Coordinating Committee, a Technical Secretariat, and five technical groups. The Technical Secretariat, consisting of the president pro tempore and representatives of two countries (past and future presidents pro tempore), convenes and supports the Council's meetings. In April 2016, Venezuela became president pro tempore for a period of one year. The last meeting of the South American Health Council was held on 11 September 2015 in Montevideo, Uruguay.

UNASUR		
Technical and political forum	PAHO-related agreements and resolutions	Subregional impact and progress
Declaration of the IX Meeting of UNASUR's South American Health Council (CSS) (11 September 2015)	Agreement No. 1: high-cost medicines. The Ministers decided to create an ad hoc committee to negotiate prices for medicines in order to promote universal access to medicines for UNASUR countries	There is concern in all South America countries regarding access to medicines, especially those of high cost. Through PAHO's Strategic Fund, the procurement of essential medicines and basic public health products takes on a new perspective as it is accompanied by technical support from PASB in the management of supply systems and the acquisition of low-cost products that meet international quality standards.
	Agreement No. 5: memorandum of understanding (MOU) between PAHO and UNASUR for collaboration through projects and activities	This MOU, which is in the process of formal approval, will enhance collaboration between PAHO and UNASUR to address health challenges in South America. The strengthening of the subregional level of technical cooperation in PAHO will facilitate implementation of the MOU.

⁸ Link to information on the South American Health Council: www.unasursg.org.

UNASUR		
Technical and political forum	PAHO-related agreements and resolutions	Subregional impact and progress
	Agreement No. 7: maternal mortality. The Council expressed concern about the new methodology implemented by WHO/UN/Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-agency Group to measure maternal mortality	The 54th Directing Council of PAHO discussed this issue and adopted Resolution CD54.R18 (2015), which calls on the interagency group to return to the method for estimating maternal mortality used during the period 1990-2015.

*Pacific Alliance*⁹

16. The Pacific Alliance is a Latin American trade bloc that currently consists of four Member States—Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru—that all border the Pacific Ocean. Health has been included in the Alliance’s agenda in vice ministerial meetings held in Colombia (22 June 2015) and Peru (29 February 2016).

Pacific Alliance: Council of Vice Ministers of Health		
Technical and political forum	PAHO-related agreements and resolutions	Subregional impact and progress
Declaration of the 1st Vice Ministerial Meeting of Health, 22 June 2015, Bogotá, Colombia	The Vice Ministers defined the health agenda of the Pacific Alliance, including access to medicines and quality of health services	The issues included in the agenda of the Pacific Alliance are important to advance the Regional Strategy for Universal Health, and the collaboration network of Member States provides a unique opportunity to enhance partnerships with key players in the region (OECD, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, IDB, etc.).
Declaration of the 2nd Vice Ministerial Meeting of Health, 29 February 2016, Lima, Peru	The Vice Ministers requested technical assistance from PAHO, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to implement the Alliance’s health agenda with respect to access to medicines and quality of health services. They also included the recommendation to implement the Health Services Network for Latin America with OECD and recommended the formulation of a plan of action for 2016-2017	

⁹ Link to information on the Pacific Alliance: <https://alianzapacifico.net/#inicio>.

*Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA-TCP)*¹⁰

17. The Alliance was founded in Havana, Cuba, on 14 December 2004 through an agreement between Venezuela and Cuba. The South American countries that are members of ALBA-TCP are Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela.

PAHO Support through Subregional Integration Processes to Address the Zika Virus in South America

18. In February 2016, during the CELAC meeting, the Ministers of Health of MERCOSUR, UNASUR, and CELAC held an emergency meeting to discuss the Zika virus emergency. The PASB Director participated in this meeting by providing relevant information on the epidemic and supported the agreements made.

19. The PAHO South American Subregional Work Plan 2016-2017 includes a component on the promotion of South-South cooperation and the prevention and control of communicable diseases, which responds well to the call made by the Ministers of Health of MERCOSUR and Associated States on 3 February 2016, for PAHO to support the promotion of South-South cooperation on the Zika emergency.

Action by the Directing Council

20. The Directing Council is invited to take note of this report and to formulate any recommendations it deems relevant.

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¹⁰ Link to information on ALBA: www.portalalba.org.