



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



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STREAMLINING THE GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS OF PAHO: REPORT ON REGIONAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETINGS WITH THE GOVERNING BODIES OF PAHO

The Working Group on Streamlining the Governance Mechanisms of PAHO believed that it would be useful to clarify the existing relationships between regional intergovernmental meetings and the Governing Bodies of PAHO, with the object of strengthening intersectoral partnerships for health in the Region.

This document presents two examples of intersectoral forums, whose resolutions and recommendations have been considered in the past by the Governing Bodies of PAHO: the Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Health and Agriculture (RIMSA) and the Meeting of Health and Environment Ministers of the Americas.

The Executive Committee is invited to consider whether the Governing Bodies of PAHO can fully or partially adopt the declarations, decisions, recommendations, conclusions, and resolutions of regional intersectoral forums, subject to its own review and assessment.

Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Health and Agriculture (RIMSA).

Background

1. According to estimates by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and the World Health Organization (WHO), 60% of human pathogens are zoonotic in nature (that is, they are transmitted from animals to man), and 75% of the emerging diseases that have appeared at the opening of the 21st century are caused by pathogens from animals or animal products. In this context, adequate coordination between the health and agriculture sectors is essential for meeting the challenge of zoonotic diseases. Likewise, the main reasons for complementation between agriculture and health are the production of food for human consumption, the national and international agricultural and livestock trade, and the protection of individuals against foodborne diseases.

2. The following events have accompanied the creation and evolution of RIMSA:

- (a) The creation of the Program on Veterinary Public Health on 1 July 1949.
- (b) At the request of the Organization of American States (OAS), PAHO assumed technical and administrative responsibility for the Pan American Foot-and-Mouth Disease Center (PANAFTOSA) in 1951.
- (c) In 1954, at the countries' request, the Pan American Zoonoses Center (CEPANZO) was created, operating until 1990, when it gave way to the Pan American Institute for Food Protection and Zoonoses (INPPAZ), which maintained operations until 2005.
- (d) In October 1967, pursuant to Resolution CIOP-3/67 of the XIII Meeting of the Inter-American Committee on the Alliance for Progress, held in Brazil, the XVII Directing Council of PAHO, through Resolution XIX, authorized the Director of PAHO, as of 1968, to convene an annual meeting of representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture to review the Program on Veterinary Public Health and its centers, PANAFTOSA and CEPANZO, and to consider matters of mutual interest.
- (e) The I Inter-American Meeting on the Control of Foot-and-mouth Disease and other Zoonoses (RICAZ I) was held in Washington, D.C., from 18 to 21 April 1968. This meeting was followed by 11 more, one each year, until 1980. Thereafter, the meeting was called the Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Animal Health (RIMSA) and was convened every two years. To date, 12 RICAZ and 14 RIMSAS have been held.
- (f) In April 1999, RIMSA 11 agreed to change the name to "Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Health and Agriculture," retaining

the acronym RIMSA to formally extend coverage of the problems common to the health and agriculture sectors. This has been the format for RIMSA 12 (2001), 13 (2003) and 14 (2005).

Mechanisms for Communication and Interaction with the Governing Bodies of PAHO

3. The purpose of RIMSA is to study matters of mutual interest to the Agriculture and Health sectors. The meetings are convened by the Director of PAHO pursuant to the mandates of the resolutions of the Directing Council (CD17.R19) that created the Meeting and the 41st Directing Council, which adopted the report of RIMSA 11 and Resolution RIMSA11.R3 on its expansion to include the formal participation of the Ministers of Health.

4. The agenda is based on the recommendations contained in the resolutions of the previous period and on requests from the countries about matters of current interest. The majority of agenda items are presented by the Ministers of Agriculture or Health and specialists in these areas. The decisions of the Meeting are expressed in resolutions and recommendations on technical matters related to disease control, food safety, and public health matters issued by specialized committees created by the Meeting, such as the Hemispheric Committee for the Eradication of Foot-and-mouth Disease (COHEFA) and the Pan American Commission for Food Safety (COPAIA).

5. The RIMSA report and resolutions are submitted to the Executive Committee of PAHO for consideration and, subsequently, to the Directing Council of PAHO, which adopts them as Governing Body mandates.

Results

6. Issues of regional import have been discussed in these forums, giving rise to hemispheric policy decisions. Some resolutions were adopted by the Directing Council of PAHO to make headway in the implementation of national programs for control and eradication of the principal zoonoses and for food safety. Some examples:

7. During the meetings of the 1980s, the Ministers of Agriculture, by consensus, resolved to support the doctrine and mission of PAHO stated by its Governing Bodies in the documents *Health for All in the Year 2000: Points and Strategies* (Official Document 173) and *Health for All in the Year 2000: Plan of Action for the Implementation of National Strategies* (Official Document 179).

8. In 1983, RIMSA 3 adopted the Regional Plan for the Eradication of Urban Rabies Transmitted by Dogs in the principal cities of the Region. That commitment was ratified

at the 31st Directing Council of PAHO, held in 1983. As a result of this Plan, cases of human rabies transmitted by dogs have plummeted by 90% with respect to the 1980s, with 11 cases in 2005. The Region is in the final phase of eradicating the disease.

9. Due to the acceptance of the subregional economic integration initiatives in which the food trade was shown to be a very important economic variable, at RIMSA 4 (1985) the Director of PAHO was asked to formulate and implement a 5-year Plan of Action in Food Protection (1986-1990). This Plan was evaluated in subsequent periods and finally became the Regional Plan for Technical Cooperation on Food Protection, which was reviewed and adopted by RIMSA 11, Res. 5 and 6, and subsequently, by the 42nd Directing Council (CD42 R.3) in 2000. RIMSA 12, held in São Paulo, Brazil, created the Pan American Commission for Food Safety (COPAIA) charged with monitoring the implementation of the Regional Plan.

10. Resolution 13 of RIMSA 5 (1987) marked a definitive and momentous stage in the regional battle against foot-and-mouth disease. The Ministers of Agriculture reached an agreement with PAHO to establish the Hemispheric Committee for the Eradication of Foot-and-mouth Disease (COHEFA), charged with evaluating and monitoring implementation of the Hemispheric Program for the Eradication of Foot-and-mouth Disease (PHEFA). This Committee is comprised of the Ministers of Agriculture and representatives of the livestock industry or producers of the different subregions: North America, Central America, the Caribbean, the Andean Area, the Amazon, and the Southern Cone. As a result, the countries have made great strides toward eradicating this disease, with 78% of South America's cattle stock disease-free with vaccination at the beginning of 2005.

11. The risk of the spread of the highly pathogenic avian influenza in birds and its potential for producing a human pandemic has underscored the importance and need to improve coordination and interaction among the health, agriculture, environment, and other sectors to protect the health and economy of the countries. This issue was discussed in RIMSA 14 and the Hemispheric Conference on Avian Influenza, held in Brasilia in November 2005, in which several Ministers of Agriculture and Health participated.

12. Given their importance for the countries' development, the latest meetings have focused on discussion and monitoring of the MDGs, where intersectoral coordination has an important role to play in advancing toward attainment of the established goals. This matter was studied during RIMSAS 13 and 14, held respectively in Washington in 2003 and Mexico in 2005.

13. It can currently be stated that RIMSA has been established as the highest intersectoral political-technical forum for agriculture and health in the Americas and the only one in the world.

14. Bringing the Ministers of Agriculture and Health together has facilitated progress in intersectoral action between agriculture and health at the regional level. PAHO has played an important role, not only as Secretariat *ex officio* of RIMSA, but because it has been able to make a technical contribution, nationally and internationally, to the implementation of the agreements and strategies stemming from RIMSA.

Meeting of Health and Environment Ministers

Background

15. The association between environmental phenomena, especially environmental degradation, and the use of chemical substances and their impact on the health of children is well known. One of the Millennium Development Goals, “Ensure environmental sustainability,” seeks to make the principles of sustainable development part of national policies and programs, with the object of reversing the loss of environmental resources. The issue of water and sanitation and its impact on health has been a concern of the World Health Organization and PAHO since their founding. Furthermore, the recent phenomena related to climate change caused by environmental degradation, which are affecting health, has made more urgent the need to forge intersectoral partnerships between the Ministers of Health and the Ministers of Environment to develop work programs capable of directly affecting health and environmental conditions. In 1992, in its Declaration of Principles and Agenda 21, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro pointed to the need for the environment and health sectors to work together to take vigorous steps in the Region to prevent environmental degradation.

16. In response to the Declaration of Principles of the United Nations Meeting in Rio de Janeiro and to make headway toward fulfillment of Agenda 21, PAHO convened the First Meeting of Ministers of Health, Environment, and Development, held 3-4 October 1995 in Washington, D.C. At this Meeting, all the countries of the Americas adopted the *Pan American Charter on Health and Environment in Sustainable Human Development (COPASAD)*, reflecting their commitment to make progress in solving the environmental health problems detected in the Region.

17. The countries adopted the Pan American Charter and recommended it as a guideline for future action within and among the countries of the Hemisphere. The Pan American Charter expresses the principles of a strategic policy and establishes common priorities and shared responsibilities among all the countries of the Region. The Charter concludes that in light of the conditions and trends that threaten to expand human misery, steps should be taken to improve health and the environment within the framework of

sustainable development. In this commitment, PAHO serves as Technical Secretariat and assists the countries of the Americas in developing national health and environment plans under strategies for cooperation between the health and environment sectors in the framework of sustainable human development. The national plans are being consolidated into subregional strategies. Of particular note is the work of Central America at the Special Meeting of the Health Sector of Central America (RESSCA XII), where the Ministers of Health and heads of Social Security of Central America invited the Ministers of Environment and the heads of the water supply campaigns to prepare the regional Plan of Action for Central America: *“Environmental Health in Central America: A Vision of the Future within the Framework of Integration.”*

18. The sustained work of the countries in this area, with support from PAHO and UNEP, culminated in the mandate issued by the III Summit of the Americas in April 2001: *“Request the United Nations Environment Program (UNP.) and PAHO to support the convening of a regional meeting between Ministers responsible for the Environment and Ministers of Health to take stock of progress achieved, to identify priority areas for renewed emphasis and cooperative initiatives, and to explore ways of moving forward in the Americas and globally, with a view to contributing to the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, recognizing the links between the environment and human health; (Point 9 of the Quebec Plan of Action: “Environment and Resource Management”).*

19. The Second Meeting of Health and Environment Ministers of the Americas, held in March 2002 in Ottawa, Canada, was chaired by Environmental Canada and Health Canada and had the following objectives:

- Build bridges between the health and environment sectors to tackle common issues.
- Improve the ability of the countries of the Hemisphere to respond efficiently to health and environment issues.
- Establish monitoring mechanisms to address health and environment problems in the Americas.
- Contribute, as appropriate, to the Earth Summit in Johannesburg.

20. Pursuant to the commitments stemming from the Meeting of Health and Environment Ministers of the Americas, a working group was formed (in Montreal, Canada, 22 and 23 May 2002), coordinated by Canada, with Health Canada and Environmental Canada as Co-Chairs and the support of PAHO, UNEP, and the OAS. The working group met with representatives of the ministries of health and environment of the five subregions: North America, Central America, the Caribbean, the Andean Region, and the Southern Cone and worked to draft the agenda for the III Meeting of Health and Environment Ministers of the Americas.

21. On 17 June, the Meeting of Health of Environment Ministers was held in response to the challenges issued by the Summit of the Americas in the Inter-American Agenda, and on 18 June, a Ministerial Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals in Health and Environment was held in response to the United Nations global agenda.

22. A joint workshop on Ecosalud was held with the IDRC, UNEP, and the OAS, through its Sustainable Development Department, in which PAHO described its joint Geo-Health project with UNEP. PAHO also organized a series of parallel events with PAHO, UNEP, and the OAS on the environmental health of children, chemical substances and their impact on health, water resources, solid waste, and the strategic partnership with the other ministries to move toward the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

23. The meeting on 17 June was attended by 16 Health and Environment Ministers of the Americas and 8 representatives of the Ministers. The Director-General of WHO: Dr. LEE Jong-Wook, the Director of PAHO, the Regional Director of UNEP, the Director of the Sustainable Development Department of the OAS, the Director of the IDRC of Canada, representatives of civil society and, to strengthen the Strategic Partnership with other sectors, the Vice Minister of Labor of El Salvador, representing the President *pro-tempore* of the XIII Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor of the OAS, and the Minister of Grenada, representing the President *pro-tempore* of the Meeting of Ministers of Education of the Americas.

24. The agreements adopted included a call for the following: Strengthen the national and regional Cooperation Agenda. Develop tools and resources for decision-making; Promote civil society participation; Concentrate regional cooperation in three areas: 1) Integrated management of water resources and solid waste 2) Safe handling of chemical substances. 3) Environmental health of children.

25. The Ministerial Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals in Health and Environment, held on 18 June, was attended by 16 Health and Environment Ministers of the Americas and 24 representatives of the Ministers, the Director-General of WHO: Dr. LEE Jong-Wook, the Director of PAHO, the Regional Director of UNEP, the Technical Director of ECLAC, the Vice Minister of Environment of Japan, the Director of the IDRC of Canada, and representatives of civil society.

26. Among the agreements adopted with respect to the Millennium Development Goals from the standpoint of their health implications, the following were mentioned: Promote an intersectoral approach among health, environment, and other sectors. Improve equity and extend social protection by studying national strategies for a joint response to the challenges of the MDGs, making a commitment to expand basic primary health care. Promote greater social investment in health. Develop inclusive policies that

promote access to health in environments where informal employment, migration, and poverty are central.

27. For the *Joint Agenda on Health and Environment* the following agreements were stressed:

- a) Strengthen joint efforts between Ministers of Health and Environment through health initiatives such as comprehensive strategies to respond to the MDGs.
- b) Prepare and execute National Plans of Action for the attainment of the MDGs, especially those related to environmental health.
- c) Promote national and local coordination between the Ministers of Health and Environment and include the water authorities in the dialogue.
- d) Promote and strengthen activities that contribute to the harmonization of international cooperation in health and environment issues, with special attention to the environmental health of children and progress toward the MDGs.

Mechanisms for Communication and Interaction with the Governing Bodies of PAHO

28. At the 45th Directing Council, the Ministers of Health adopted the decision that PAHO would support the Meeting of Health and Environment Ministers in Mar del Plata and, to strengthen the intersectoral approach, requested that the representatives of the Ministers of Labor and Education of the Americas be invited to Mar del Plata. That way, the decision would be issued by the Governing Bodies and their implementation would be supported by PAHO through the Meeting in Mar del Plata and the presence of the Ministers of Education and Environment.

29. An information document has been prepared for the 47th Directing Council that reports the results of the intersectoral approach in support of the Millennium Development Goals, and a panel in which the Minister of Health of Argentina, as host of the Meeting of Health and Environment Ministers, will share the results and agreements on this matter. Thus, a mandate of the Governing Bodies has been fulfilled, and it is being reported to them one year later.

Action by the Executive Committee

30. The Executive Committee is invited to consider whether the Governing Bodies of PAHO can fully or partially adopt the declarations, decisions, recommendations,

conclusions, and the resolutions of regional intersectoral forums, subject to its own review and assessment.

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