



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

FIFTY-FIFTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY
Provisional agenda item 8

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Centenary of the Pan American Health Organization

Report by the Secretariat

1. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) was founded 100 years ago when delegates from 11 nations in the Americas met in Washington, DC, and established the International Sanitary Bureau. The delegates formulated agreements and regulations for control of such infectious diseases as yellow fever, plague and cholera, which were hampering international trade. The Bureau gradually expanded, as did the number of health issues with which it dealt. In 1924, 18 countries of the Americas signed the Pan American Sanitary Code, which set out the legal framework for the body now known as the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, the secretariat of PAHO. That code, eventually ratified by all countries of the Americas, remains in force today, committing its signatories to common and cooperative efforts in public health.
2. In 1949, the year following ratification of the Constitution of the World Health Organization, an agreement was signed between WHO and PAHO which provided that the Pan American Sanitary Bureau would serve as the WHO Regional Office for the Americas.¹ In 1950, PAHO signed a formal agreement with the Organization of American States, recognizing its role as the specialized health organization for the inter-American system. PAHO maintains offices and centres in almost all countries of the Americas, providing technical cooperation, building capacity to address the priorities the countries identify, promoting the pan-American approach of working together to achieve common goals, and striving to reduce health inequalities.
3. PAHO has been at the forefront of numerous public health advances in the Americas over the years, leading campaigns to eradicate smallpox, poliomyelitis and measles. It strives to develop strategic collaboration among Member States and partners in order to promote equity in health, to combat disease, and to improve the quality and length of the lives of the peoples of the Americas. It values equity, excellence, solidarity, respect and integrity.
4. PAHO has also pioneered collaboration with other international agencies in health and recently initiated the Shared Agenda for Health in the Americas, providing support to Member States in securing additional resources and commitments to health programmes. In addition to furthering technical cooperation among countries, PAHO promotes technical collaboration among regions in order to share the fruit of its experience with others.

¹ Agreement between the World Health Organization and the Pan American Health Organization, Article 2.

ACTION BY THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

5. The Health Assembly is invited to consider the draft resolution contained in resolution EB109.R9.

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