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STATUS OF RIMSA AND HEMA AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH PAHO'S GOVERNING BODIES

This document seeks to respond to a number of questions raised by the Working Group of the Executive Committee on Streamlining the Governance Mechanisms of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) regarding the Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Health and Agriculture (RIMSA) and the Meeting of Health and Environment Ministers of the Americas (HEMA). Specifically, this document discusses (i) the mandates of RIMSA and HEMA; (ii) their role in relation to PAHO's Governing Bodies; and (iii) the impact of their recommendations and/or decisions on PAHO's Governing Bodies.

A. RIMSA

RIMSA is a regional advisory political forum^{1,2} comprised of the Ministers of Health and Agriculture from PAHO Member States,³ convened by the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (PASB) every two years⁴ "to establish, orient and monitor matters of mutual interest to the agriculture and health sectors."⁵ RIMSA evaluates technical cooperation in veterinary public health and reviews the performance of the Pan American Foot-and-Mouth Disease Center (PANAFTOSA) and the Pan American Institute

¹ Pan American Health Organization. Veterinary Public Health: Progress Report on the Secretariat's Compliance with the Mandates of the PAHO Governing Bodies, 2004-2005. Washington, DC: PAHO; 22 March 2005. (Document RIMSA14/3) ¶3.

² Pan American Health Organization. Resolution CD43.R5. XII Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Health and Agriculture. Washington, DC: PAHO; 26 September 2001.

³ See RIMSA web site <http://www.paho.org/english/ad/dpc/vp/rimsa-home.htm>.

⁴ Resolution CD43.R5. RIMSA previously met once a year (Resolution CD17.R19, October 1967).

⁵ Resolution CD43.R5.

for Food Protection and Zoonoses (INPPAZ).⁶ RIMSA also represents a forum through which the PAHO Veterinary Public Health Unit presents and consolidates proposals and receives the political support needed for their development.⁷

Given the above, RIMSA is an intersectoral regional forum, not a Governing Body of PAHO. Its “resolutions,” “recommendations” and so-called “mandates”⁸ are therefore not binding on PAHO’s Governing Bodies or the Secretariat. Thus, for example, the Pan American Sanitary Conference has decided to “adopt” a number of “recommendations,”⁹ “ratified” some of RIMSA’s “mandates,”¹⁰ and requested the Director of the PASB to report on the outcome of specific matters discussed in RIMSA meetings.¹¹ Additionally, PAHO’s Executive Committee and Directing Council have “taken note” of RIMSA-issued reports,¹² and “endorsed” some of RIMSA’s “recommendations” and “resolutions.”¹³

B. HEMA: Meeting of the Health and Environment Ministers of the Americas

The Members States of the Organization of American States (OAS) at the Third Summit of the Americas held in April 2001 in Quebec, Canada, requested the support of PAHO and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in convening a regional meeting of ministers of health and environment of the Americas 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 . . . contributing to the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development.”¹⁴ Since then, HEMA assembles in advance of each Summit of the Americas.¹⁵

⁶ Resolution CD43.R5.

⁷ See note 3.

⁸ For examples, see the resolutions of the 12th Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Health and Agriculture in its Final Report; and the resolutions referring to the Pan American Foot-and-Mouth Disease Center (RICAZ and RIMSA 1968-1981).

⁹ Pan American Health Organization. Proposed PAHO/WHO Plan of Action for Technical Cooperation in Food Safety, 2006-2007. Washington, DC: PAHO; 29 March 2005. (Document RIMSA 14/6). ¶ 20.

¹⁰ Pan American Health Organization. Veterinary Public Health: Progress Report on the Secretariat’s Compliance with the Mandates of the PAHO Governing Bodies, 2004-2005. Washington, DC: PAHO; 22 March 2005. (Document RIMSA 14/3). ¶ 48.

¹¹ Pan American Health Organization. Resolution CSP23.R23. Review of the Pan American Zoonoses Center agreement. Washington, DC: PAHO; September 1990.

¹² Pan American Health Organization. Resolution CD27.R8. I Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Animal Health. Washington, DC: PAHO; September-October 1980.

¹³ Pan American Health Organization. Resolution CD44.R7. 13th Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Health and Agriculture (RIMSA 13). Washington, DC: PAHO; 25 September 2003.

¹⁴ Third Summit of the Americas, Plan of Action. 20-21 April 2001. p. 21.

¹⁵ Meeting of Health and Environment Ministers of the Americas, Ministerial Communiqué (4-5 March 2002). ¶ 7

At its first meeting in Ottawa, Canada, in 2002,¹⁶ HEMA adopted a Ministerial Communiqué calling for the creation of a regional task force to operate in 2002-2003, to be convened by Canada with the collaboration of PAHO and UNEP. The task force was to design a follow-up mechanism for the ministerial meetings and conduct consultations between countries and exchange information.¹⁷ After considering the matter in 2002, the Executive Committee of PAHO decided to request the Director of the PASB to (i) collaborate in the task force,¹⁸ and (ii) integrate the proposals of the task force into PAHO's ongoing technical cooperation work, with special emphasis on collaboration with countries in capacity-building and work in hygiene, water and sanitation, air pollution, and chemical safety.¹⁹

The Special Summit of the Americas held in Monterrey, Mexico, on 12 and 13 January 2004, further requested HEMA to “develop a cooperation agenda to prevent and minimize the negative impacts to the environment and human health.”²⁰

The Ministers at HEMA in Mar de Plata, Argentina, in 2005²¹ requested the support of PAHO and other development agencies “in the context of [their respective] mandates”²² to (i) support HEMA's Working Group responsible for following up on matters related to the prevention and reduction of negative impacts on the environment and health, as stated by HEMA 2005's cooperative agenda;²³ and (ii) continue with the actions aimed at the contribution of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration.²⁴

From the above, one may conclude that, much like RIMSA, HEMA is an intersectoral regional forum, not a Governing Body of PAHO. Thus, while its decisions, recommendations, and mandates are not binding on PAHO, they may influence and orient the decisions of PAHO's Governing Bodies.

¹⁶ See web site http://www.ec.gc.ca/international/regorgs/hema_e.htm.

¹⁷ Pan American Health Organization. Report on the Meeting of the Health and Environment Ministers of the Americas (HEMA). Washington, DC: PAHO; 10 July 2002. (Document CSP26/27). ¶ 3.2.

¹⁸ Pan American Health Organization. Resolution CE130.R20. Report on the Meeting of the Health and Environment Ministers of the Americas (HEMA). Washington, DC: PAHO; 21 June 2002. (2)(b).

¹⁹ Resolution CE130.R20. (2)(b).

²⁰ Special Summit of the Americas, Declaration of Nuevo Leon, 12-13 January 2004. p. 8.

²¹ Pan American Health Organization. Actions Taken in 2004-2005 to Strengthen the Pan American Sanitary Bureau in Accordance with the Strategic Plan 2003-2007. Washington, DC: PAHO; 31 August 2005. (Document CD46/INF/3, Rev. 1, p. 3).

²² Meeting of Ministers of Health and Environment of the Americas, Declaration of Mar del Plata, 17 June 2005. ¶¶ 10 and 14.

²³ See note 21. ¶ 10.

²⁴ See note 21. ¶ 14.