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**OPENING REMARKS BY THE HON. MR. ILAN GOLDFAJN,
PRESIDENT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK**

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Distinguished ministers of health, leaders, head table, colleagues at the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), several partners with us, at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), working in the countries. This is a pleasure.

It is great to join you all for this opening session of the 60th Directing Council and 75th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Americas.

I want, in particular, to thank Dr. Barbosa for his leadership, his invitation. We have been working together, especially in two areas: advocacy for primary health care and health information systems (including digital ones) in the Americas. The IDB has been working in the health sector that has advanced in the last decade but, as you know, has room to improve, in terms of efficiency, quality, access, equity. Some of these, challenges you have heard before in the speeches.

You know our Region's health care challenges better than anyone, but let me highlight a few that we, at IDB, would like to highlight:

First, health systems and citizens face a growing burden of noncommunicable diseases. Some estimates show that, by 2045, the Region will have seven times more people with diabetes than in 2000.

Mental health is a growing concern. Even before the pandemic, depression was so common that, just in 2019, the Region lost the equivalent of over 2 million workers due to its effects.

Second, the low quality of health services remains, still, a challenge in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In our Region, 70% of preventable deaths are attributable to low-quality, rather than lack of access to, services. So access is an issue, but quality is quite important.

Third, aging—major challenge.

Our Region has achieved impressive advances in average lifespan. But the bad news is that we are still ill-equipped for a major demographic shift:

Fast-forward to 2090, more than 36% of people in Latin America will be elderly—making it the Region with the world's highest percentage of adults over 60. So we will be the Region with the most aging population.

The 2020s is the Decade of Healthy Aging: a topic we are collaborating on closely with PAHO.

Fourth, no country is immune to the climate crisis. You know that climate is one of our priorities at the IDB.

Severe heatwaves are causing more people to die, and climate change is increasing the prevalence of respiratory diseases.

Finally, what many of you call “health fatigue” is affecting finance ministries—finance ministers at my governance at the IDB, some of which feel they invested enough in health care during the pandemic. But there is much more to do.

Let me highlight what IDB and PAHO are doing and could be doing together:

Some of the challenges I mentioned, we are tackling. Not all of them, but some of them. For example, this summer, just several weeks ago, Dr. Jarbas joined us at the IDB headquarters. We celebrated five years of collaboration on what we call Information Systems for Health and Digital Transformation.

We worked together on Digital Transformation: we had leaders from Brazil to Ecuador, Guyana, Jamaica, who joined us on that day to discuss how we can work together on the regional digital transformation, where we can deliver equitable, high-quality, and connected health for all.

Let me give you an example of other investments that IDB helped several years ago, decades ago: the Pan-American Highway, when it was born. The IDB was involved in building this, a physical road, but it promoted integration, it promoted a lot of benefits.

What if we today, the IDB and PAHO, promote the same type of integration and connectivity, but in health care? A Pan-American Highway for connected, digital health.

We have learned, firsthand, that diseases go beyond national borders.

Another topic: the pandemic also showed that health emergencies are not just physical risks, but also macroeconomic risks that help with that fatigue we mentioned.

Our Region shrank almost 7%, the GDP fell 7%, in 2020, twice the global average.

So, we do need to scale up our resources right now, today, and we need to seize the opportunity to prepare health systems for the next pandemic, as you heard from the speeches of Dr. Jarbas and others. We need to prepare for the consequences of climate change by increasing resilience, quality, and effectiveness of primary health care.

Let me take the opportunity to mention an initiative we are now developing at the IDB with some countries of the Region: the Amazon. We have launched the Amazonia Forever. This is an IDB holistic, umbrella program, that includes a lot of initiatives from other places, to develop this region, the Amazon, inclusively and sustainably.

It is based on five pillars: deforestation and control, taking care of the citizens' infrastructure, taking care of the bioeconomy to give alternatives to people, talking about sustainable agriculture production, and last but not least, "people." It is this fifth pillar, "people," where the program provides a great platform to tackle health care challenges in a particularly sensitive area for the Region and the planet.

We are looking forward to our meeting in December, in Uruguay, when the World Bank, PAHO, and the IDB will join the Alliance for Primary Health Care, for us a very important priority.

This alliance will focus on investment, innovation, and implementing primary health care to improve lives.

This will build on our partnership in the Economy and Health Dialogue of the Americas, launched last year at the Summit of the Americas, to facilitate collaboration between finance ministries and health ministries.

So let me conclude here today saying that I am confident that through our partnerships and alliances, we can successfully tackle the challenges I mentioned.

I wish you the best of success during the sessions and I look forward to seeing you again soon.

Thank you very much, muchas gracias, muito obrigado.

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