

Directing Council
**PAN AMERICAN
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION**
XL Meeting

Regional Committee
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HEALTH
ORGANIZATION**
XLIX Meeting

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ANALYSIS OF THE PROGRAM ON HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

This document was originally presented to the 120th Session of the Executive Committee of the Directing Council. The Committee recommended to the Directing Council the adoption of a resolution (see Annex) supporting the Director's proposal for refocusing the operational approach of the Program on Health and Environment, which includes, among other things, the disestablishment in Mexico of the Pan American Center for Human Ecology and Health (ECO) by 31 December 1997 and its merger with the Pan American Center for Sanitary Engineering and Environmental Sciences (CEPIS); transferring to the Government of Mexico ECO's physical plant; and supporting the establishment of a National Center on Environmental Health. The proposed resolution also asks the Director to proceed with negotiations with the Governments of Mexico and Peru to formalize the changes proposed, ensuring that the services of the new CEPIS meet the countries' needs in environmental health. The present version of the document includes some additional information in respect to the transfer of ECO tasks to CEPIS and the preparation of the corresponding plan of work.

The Directing Council is asked to comment on the work being undertaken by the Division of Health and Environment, to provide guidance on its further development, and especially to comment on the proposed disestablishment of the Pan American Center for Human Ecology and Health (ECO) and the merger of the functions of ECO and CEPIS.

Global, regional, national, and local forces are transforming the environments that determine human health in the Member States of PAHO. In light of these trends, there is a need to reassess periodically the situation of the environmental health programs of the Member States and to analyze to what degree PAHO's programs are adequately structured and managed in order to serve the ever-changing needs of the countries.

The document spells out some of the health implications of the current environmental trends and of the mandates and plans of action of the major regional and global events dealing with these issues. Specifically, it includes contributions from the Pan American Conference on Health and Environment in Sustainable Human Development (Washington, D.C., October 1995). The document suggests a set of leadership and support functions in relation to health and environment for the national health authorities. It proposes intensification of intersectoral actions for health with emphasis on environmental health. After an analysis of the evolution of the environmental health program at PAHO and its present situation, specific suggestions for realignment of its structure and functions are made. These include the fusion of two Pan American centers into one.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document, which was originally presented to the 120th Session of the Executive Committee, has been revised and expanded to include aspects related to the analysis for the disestablishment of the Pan American Center for Human Ecology and Health (ECO) and its integration with the Pan American Center for Sanitary Engineering and Environmental Sciences (CEPIS), with particular attention to the transfer of functions and the safeguarding of core and essential programs of ECO as noted in section 4.4.3, *Realignment of the Division of Health and Environment and its Units: Proposed Disestablishment of ECO and Integration of its Functions with CEPIS*.

While traditional environment-related public health hazards, such as unsafe food and water, microbial contamination of the environment, and overall poor sanitation, are still prevalent in most countries, new problems have emerged. Many of the hazards associated with chemical substances in the environment are as important to developing as they are to developed countries.

The health sector is being challenged to assume new roles as leader and advisor to other sectors, thus promoting strong intersectoral actions for health.

The present document analyzes these challenges in the contexts of the countries and the Organization. The first chapter links environmental health concerns with overall development issues. The second chapter highlights how global development and environment trends impact human health and demand government commitments. It also makes reference to international commitments by countries, including the Pan American Conference on Health and Environment in Sustainable Human Development. In the third chapter, policy approaches for national strategies are discussed and there is a proposal for pertinent health sector role and functions. The fourth and last chapter analyzes PAHO's role in health, environment, and human development, concluding with a proposal of adjustment to the functions and structure of its present program, including the proposed disestablishment of ECO and its merger with CEPIS.

The Directing Council is asked to review the document, comment on the realignment of roles in the Division, and consider adopting the resolution proposed in the

TO CONSULT THE COMPLETE DOCUMENT YOU MAY [CLICK HERE ON DOC. NO. 140, CE12022](#), presented to the 120th Executive Committee.

ANNEX: CE120.R22

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

THE 120th MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,

Having reviewed the report on the analysis of the Program on Health and Environment (Document CE12022) and aware of the growing importance of this programmatic area to the Member States; and

Noting with satisfaction the evolution of the Organization=s Program on Health and Environment in response to the mandates stemming from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) as well as from a series of hemispheric meetings of heads of State and government,

RESOLVES:

To recommend to the Directing Council the adoption of a resolution along the following lines:

THE XL MEETING OF THE DIRECTING COUNCIL,

Having reviewed the report (Document CD4023) on the analysis of the Program on Health and Environment,

RESOLVES:

1. To call upon Member States to continue efforts to assume a strong leadership role in the management of environment-based health problems.
2. To accept the Director=s proposal for refocusing the operational approach of the Program on Health and Environment.

3. To request the Director to:

(a) continue negotiations with the Government of Mexico in order to proceed with the legal and administrative measures that may be required to formalize the disestablishment of the Pan American Center for Human Ecology and Health (ECO) by 31 December 1997;

(b) support the Government of Mexico in the establishment of a national center of environmental health;

(c) in view of the disestablishment of ECO, to make appropriate modifications in the program of work of the Center for Sanitary Engineering and Environmental Sciences (CEPIS), with special reference to training, particularly in the area of environmental epidemiology, in consultation with the Government of Peru;

(d) ensure, in the respective measures, that the countries have easy access to the services of CEPIS and that the services be comprehensive and meet the countries' needs in environmental health.

*(Adopted at the seventh plenary session,
26 June 1997)*