

168th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Virtual Session, 21-25 June 2021

Provisional Agenda Item 3.1

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REPORT ON THE 15TH SESSION OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON PROGRAM, BUDGET, AND ADMINISTRATION

1. The Subcommittee on Program, Budget, and Administration held its 15th Session online using a video conferencing platform, from 24 to 26 March 2021.
 2. The meeting was attended by delegates of the seven Members of the Subcommittee elected by the Executive Committee or designated by the Director: Barbados, Canada, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, United States of America, and Uruguay. Representatives of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and Spain attended in an observer capacity.
 3. Elected as officers were the Delegates of Uruguay (President), Mexico (Vice President), and Guatemala (Rapporteur).
 4. The Subcommittee discussed the following agenda items:
 - Outline of the Program Budget of the Pan American Health Organization 2022-2023
 - Scale of Assessed Contributions 2022-2023
 - Engagement with non-State Actors
 - Non-State Actors in Official Relations with PAHO
 - Appointment of One Member to the Audit Committee of PAHO
 - Overview of the Financial Report of the Director for 2020
 - Update on the Appointment of the External Auditor of PAHO for 2022-2023
 - Amendments to the PASB Staff Regulations and Rules
 - PASB Human Resources Management
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- Update on the Master Capital Investment Fund
 - Update on the Working Capital Fund
 - Report on Strategic Issues between PAHO and WHO
 - Report on the Status of the Emergency Loan from the Revolving Fund for Access to Vaccines to the Regional Revolving Fund for Strategic Public Health Supplies
 - Draft Provisional Agenda for the 168th Session of the Executive Committee
5. The Subcommittee heard a briefing about the current situation of COVID-19 Pandemic in the Region of the Americas and related key challenges.
6. The Final Report of the session is attached.

Annex

**15th SESSION OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE
ON PROGRAM, BUDGET, AND ADMINISTRATION
OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Virtual Session, 24–26 March 2021

CE168/4
Annex

SPBA15/FR
26 March 2021
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FINAL REPORT

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FINAL REPORT

1. The 15th Session of the Subcommittee on Program, Budget, and Administration of the Executive Committee of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) was held from 24 to 26 March 2021. Owing to the extraordinary and unprecedented circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the session was held online using a video conferencing platform. The session was attended by delegates of the following seven Members of the Subcommittee elected by the Executive Committee or designated by the Director: Barbados, Canada, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, United States of America, and Uruguay. Representatives of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and Spain attended in an observer capacity.

Opening of the Session

2. Dr. Carissa Etienne (Director, Pan American Sanitary Bureau) opened the session, welcoming the delegates of the Members of the Subcommittee and of the Member States participating as observers. Summarizing the Organization's main technical achievements in 2020, she noted that PAHO had remained an authoritative voice for health in the Region, providing political, strategic, and technical guidance on the response to COVID-19. In line with the principles of solidarity and equity, the Organization had called for unity in addressing the impact of the pandemic and providing equitable access to COVID-19 response tools, while simultaneously advocating for continuity of essential health services in order to save lives and mitigate damage to public health gains. Despite the extraordinary conditions created by the pandemic, PAHO had remained a catalyst for improving the overall health and well-being of the peoples of the Americas. Although resources had been concentrated on the pandemic response, important progress had been made towards the targets of the PAHO Strategic Plan 2020-2025 and the commitments included in the Sustainable Health Agenda for the Americas 2018-2030 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

3. Among other achievements, the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (PASAB or Bureau) had: *a)* helped countries to increase critical care capacity and improve the coordination and integration of health services delivery; *b)* facilitated access to COVID-19 supplies; *c)* provided support and advice in preparation for the procurement of vaccines through the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) Facility, while also supporting regular vaccine negotiations in order to maintain affordability and availability of vaccines for routine immunization; *d)* advocated for fair, equitable, and timely allocation of vaccines to all countries of the Region participating in COVAX; *e)* stepped up its collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to provide guidance on policies for controlling and mitigating the economic and social effects of the pandemic, reopening safely, and rebuilding in a sustainable and inclusive manner; *f)* generated new data, knowledge, and guidance on the linkages between COVID-19 and noncommunicable diseases and mental health; and *g)* worked to increase high-level political commitment and consensus within Member States to adopt PAHO's information systems for health model.

4. In addition, the Bureau had begun a process of rethinking its public health priorities and ways of working in the light of the lessons learned from the pandemic response. Key insights had emerged from that process, which would be shared with Member States during the 168th Session of the Executive Committee in June 2021.

Procedural Matters

Election of Officers

5. The following Member States were elected to serve as officers of the Subcommittee for the 15th Session:

<i>President:</i>	Uruguay	(Dr. Daniel Salinas)
<i>Vice President:</i>	Mexico	(Mtro. Marcos Cantero Cortes)
<i>Rapporteur:</i>	Guatemala	(Licda. María Eugenia Ardón Quezada)

6. The Director served as Secretary *ex officio*, and Ms. Mary Lou Valdez (Deputy Director, PASB) served as Technical Secretary.

Adoption of the Agenda and Program of Meetings (Documents SPBA15/1 and SPBA15/WP/1)

7. The Subcommittee adopted the provisional agenda submitted by the Director (Document SPBA15/1) without change. The Subcommittee also adopted a program of meetings (Document SPBA15/WP/1).

Program Policy Matters

Outline of the Program Budget of the Pan American Health Organization 2022-2023 (Document SPBA15/2)

8. Mr. Dean Chambliss (Director, Department of Planning, Budget, and Evaluation, PASB) presented the outline of the proposed program budget for 2022-2023, noting that it would be the second biennial program budget adopted under the PAHO Strategic Plan 2020-2025. The program budget for 2022-2023 would define the health outcomes and outputs to be achieved collectively by the Bureau and Member States during the biennium and establish the budget for achieving those results. The program budget would be aligned with and respond to regional and global mandates, including the PAHO Strategic Plan 2020-2025, the Sustainable Health Agenda for the Americas 2018-2030 (SHAA30), the Thirteenth General Program of Work (GPW13) of the World Health Organization (WHO), and WHO programme budget for 2022-2023.

9. The program budget would also be aligned with the Organization's new budget policy, adopted in September 2019.¹ In addition, it would take account of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lessons learned from the response thereto; the outcome of the strategic review of the Strategic Plan priorities at country level; and historical budget and staffing levels. Mr. Chambliss noted in relation to the latter that, as a knowledge-based organization, PAHO's budgets were largely driven by staffing expenditures.

10. The proposal called for a budget of US\$ 640 million² for base programs, an amount that was \$20 million higher than in the 2020-2021 biennium. The increase would be financed entirely from an anticipated increase in the WHO allocation to the Region of the Americas, which, based on the figure endorsed by the WHO Executive Board at its 148th Session, was expected to rise by \$36.7 million, from \$215.8 million to \$252.5 million, although that amount was subject to change during the 74th World Health Assembly in May. Moreover, since the WHO allocation to the Region had historically not been received in full, the Bureau had included \$20 million of the expected increase in the program budget proposal.

11. PAHO net assessed contributions would remain unchanged under the program budget 2022-2023, and miscellaneous revenue was also expected to remain the same, while PAHO voluntary contributions and funding from other sources were expected to decrease by around \$16.7 million, from \$192.8 million to \$176.1 million. Mr. Chambliss emphasized, however, that the lower figure did not mean that the Bureau intended to reduce its efforts to raise voluntary contributions; the decrease merely reflected the change in the relative proportions of the WHO and PAHO portions of the budget. Mr. Chambliss concluded by outlining the timeline for completion of the program budget proposal, noting that the full draft proposal would be presented to the Executive Committee at its 168th Session in June.

12. The Subcommittee welcomed the Bureau's efforts to incorporate lessons learned from the previous biennium and from the pandemic response in the budget proposal and to work with Member States to review and refocus the Organization's objectives and priorities to reflect current needs in the Region. The Bureau was requested to provide the Executive Committee with a report on the trends and patterns observed in the reprioritization exercise.

13. It was pointed out that Member States faced unprecedented financial pressures as a result of the pandemic, and it was emphasized that the Bureau should develop a realistic budget proposal that reflected that context of resource constraints. The Bureau was encouraged to continue to seek economies through increased efficiency and to maximize the use of resources for first-line activities by reducing administrative expenses in a framework of austerity that prioritized technical cooperation with Member States. It was

¹ See Document CD57/5 and Resolution CD57.R3 (2019).

² Unless otherwise indicated, all monetary figures in this report are expressed in United States dollars.

emphasized that Member States must pay their assessed contributions in order to ensure that the Organization was able to implement the program budget for 2022-2023.

14. Mr. Chambliss assured the Subcommittee that the proposal to be presented to the Executive Committee in June would include information on trends and patterns observed during the reprioritization exercise and on the implications of the revisions to strategic priorities for resources allocation. The document would also include information on the numerous innovative efficiency measures that the Bureau had introduced. The Bureau had accounted for the possibility that the Region might not receive its full allocation from WHO by proposing an increase in the base budget that was less than the expected increase in the regional allocation from WHO. The Bureau had also considered the resource constraints faced by Member States, as reflected in the fact that assessed contributions would remain unchanged. For those reasons, the Bureau believed that the proposal was realistic in terms of funding, but it would continue to monitor the evolving situation in the Region and make adjustments as needed.

15. The Director acknowledged that there were several unknowns with regard to the program budget proposal, one being the proposed programme budget of WHO for 2022-2023, which would likely change before the 74th World Health Assembly in May, and the changes could have an impact on PAHO's proposed program budget. The Bureau's ongoing work with Member States would be shaped by the way that the Organization's strategic priorities evolved—which would determine where emphasis should be placed—and by its prospects for resource mobilization. She pointed out that, although the Bureau was not asking for any increase in assessed contributions, there had been no increase since 2012, which in real terms represented a reduction in funding for the base budget. She affirmed that the Bureau continued to pursue greater efficiencies and to apply the lessons learned from the pandemic in its work.

16. The Subcommittee took note of the report.

Scale of Assessed Contributions for 2022-2023 (Document SPBA15/3)

17. Mr. Dean Chambliss (Director, Department of Planning, Budget, and Evaluation, PASB) introduced Document SPBA15/3, noting that, like the proposed program budget 2022-2023, the proposed scale of assessed contributions for the period would be the second to be approved under the PAHO Strategic Plan 2020-2025. The scale, along with the total level of assessed contributions set in the program budget 2022-2023, would determine the amounts to be paid by PAHO Member States during the biennium.

18. He recalled that, pursuant to the PAHO Constitution, the Organization's scale of assessed contributions was tied to the scale adopted by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) in October 2018, which covered the period 2019-2023. That scale applied different yearly rates between 2020 and 2023, and from 2021 to 2023 the OAS had modified the percentage calculation on a yearly basis, with a percentage increase for all OAS Member States, except the United States. The PAHO scale for 2022-2023 would be aligned with the respective OAS scales for those years. The scale

of assessed contributions for PAHO Associate Members and Participating States, which were not members of the OAS, would be calculated as per Document CD54/5, Rev.1.

19. Following Mr. Chambliss's introduction, the Delegate of the United States pointed out that it was not in the Organization's best interest to be heavily dependent on a single donor and that equitable sharing of assessed contributions among Member States would encourage financial sustainability.

20. The Director, noting that the new OAS scale would require some PAHO Member States to pay a higher contribution to the Organization, said that the Bureau recognized that many countries faced economic difficulties as a result of the pandemic. Nevertheless, the current circumstances had highlighted the importance of timely payment of assessed contributions, and she hoped that Member States would make the necessary arrangements to ensure that their payments were made on a timely basis.

21. The Subcommittee took note of the report.

Engagement with non-State Actors (Document SPBA15/4)

22. Dr. Heidi Jiménez (Legal Counsel, PASB) introduced Document SPBA15/4, which detailed the steps taken by PAHO to implement the Framework of Engagement with non-State Actors (FENSA), adopted by the World Health Assembly in May 2016 and by the PAHO Directing Council in September 2016. She reported that, throughout 2020, the Bureau had continued working closely with the WHO Secretariat to ensure a coherent and consistent approach to FENSA implementation, and that the PAHO FENSA focal point had participated in a WHO evaluation of FENSA.

23. In 2020, the Bureau had conducted almost 300 standard due diligence and risk analysis reviews, as well as hundreds of simplified reviews of low-risk engagements. Early on in the COVID-19 pandemic, PASB had quickly recognized the need to review potential engagements with non-State actors in an expedited manner. As a result, the Director had implemented special procedures to respond more rapidly to the COVID-19 pandemic, while ensuring that the Organization's integrity, independence, and reputation were preserved. Model COVID-19 agreements had also been developed to enable the Organization to receive financial and in-kind contributions more expeditiously.

24. The Organization had participated in a number of innovative collaborations with non-State actors during the year. For example, it had worked with social media platforms to disseminate PAHO messaging and counter health-related misinformation about COVID-19. It had also collaborated on the release of two songs—the proceeds of which had gone to supporting PAHO and its response to the pandemic—and teamed up with a global entertainment company to create a video for young children on how to protect themselves against COVID-19.

25. In the discussion that followed, the Subcommittee welcomed the Organization's efforts to continue working closely with the WHO Secretariat on FENSA implementation.

The Bureau was asked to indicate what action it was taking at the regional level to implement the recommendations of the WHO evaluation of FENSA, including with regard to the development of an overarching implementation strategy and plan for engagement with non-State actors. It was suggested that the report would be even more useful if it contained a brief overview of the lessons learned from the implementation of FENSA in the various WHO regions and details of how the Region of the Americas had contributed to strengthening the FENSA focal point network.

26. Subcommittee Members recognized that the COVID-19 pandemic had hindered the Organization's ability to conduct FENSA training and update guidance materials. The importance of continuing to review and update FENSA guidelines was nevertheless stressed. Information on the training sessions planned for 2021 was requested. The Bureau was asked whether it planned to evaluate the simplified COVID-19 procedures to identify successes, challenges, and lessons learned. It was suggested that the report should include more information about those streamlined processes, including the criteria used to assess non-State actor engagements and the number of requests that had been received, evaluated, accepted, and rejected. The Bureau was asked whether the streamlined procedures could be used not only for reviewing proposed COVID-19-related engagements but also for fostering stronger relationships between PAHO and non-State actors more generally.

27. It was noted that the pandemic had highlighted the critical role played by non-State actors in responding to health emergencies, and it was recommended that PAHO should further expand its outreach and engagement with non-State actors in the Region. Information on the Bureau's collaborations with non-State actors at the country level was requested. The Bureau was also asked to indicate whether it could provide Member States with recommendations or procedural guidelines for use at the national level to assess, mitigate, and manage conflicts of interest in potential engagements with non-State actors, particularly those related to the pharmaceutical, food, and alcoholic drink industries.

28. In response, Dr. Jiménez explained that WHO was responsible for carrying out the strategy and implementation plan for FENSA, with PAHO participating actively through its focal point. She emphasized that FENSA was fully implemented in PAHO, and that the Bureau continued to develop its procedures at Headquarters and in country offices. The Bureau also monitored and reviewed the procedures put in place by WHO and worked closely with the WHO Secretariat to implement recommendations, where applicable to PAHO. The WHO Secretariat was preparing a document on lessons learned regarding FENSA implementation, as was the Bureau. Efforts to develop new strategies would resume once the pandemic had eased. Although the Organization had been forced to postpone training in 2020 to focus on the pandemic, there were plans to resume training in the second half of 2021 and to develop virtual courses on FENSA.

29. With regard to the streamlined procedures implemented during the pandemic, she assured the Subcommittee that the Bureau intended to conduct a review as soon as it was feasible to do so. It was clear that those simplified procedures had enabled COVID-19-related engagements to be reviewed within 48 hours. While the process was admittedly a labor-intensive one, it had undoubtedly helped the Organization to respond

more effectively to the pandemic. It was hoped that the procedures would therefore continue to be used in post-pandemic times. She emphasized that the Bureau actively encouraged collaboration with all types of non-State actors and was working to develop and disseminate relevant policies and procedures. Lastly, she noted that the Bureau had received a number of requests from Member States for technical assistance in relation to high-risk engagements with non-State actors in the tobacco, alcohol, and food industries and would be happy to share its experience, make recommendations, and provide training on the issue at the national level, if requested by Member States.

30. The Director added that the widespread nature and severity of the pandemic, coupled with PAHO's financial crisis, had forced the Organization to broaden its engagement with non-State actors not only to mobilize resources, disseminate information, and host training webinars, but also to take advantage of innovative methodologies. She pointed out, however, that the Organization's resources had been stretched significantly in its endeavor to ramp up its engagement with non-State actors—a particularly resource-heavy undertaking—while also meeting the demands of Member States and dealing with the unprecedented situation.

31. The Subcommittee took note of the report.

Non-State Actors in Official Relations with PAHO (Document SPBA15/5)

32. Mr. Alberto Kleiman (Director, Department of External Relations, Partnerships and Resource Mobilization, PASB) recalled that official relations between PAHO and non-State actors (NSAs) were based on a three-year collaboration plan developed and agreed on jointly by the NSA and PAHO. The three-year plans were structured in accordance with the PAHO Strategic Plan and could not be primarily of a commercial or for-profit nature. He reported that, during the reporting period, an application had been received from one non-State actor seeking to enter into official relations with PAHO: Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. In addition, nine organizations in official relations were due for their triennial review.

33. The Bureau had analyzed the application of Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids in accordance with the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors and determined that it met the requirements for admission into official relations with PAHO. It therefore recommended that the organization's application be approved. The Bureau also recommended the continuation of relations with all nine of the organizations due for triennial review.

34. Mr. Kleiman concluded by highlighting the valuable contributions made by non-State actors to the work of PAHO, noting that they enabled the Organization to expand the scope of its activities, strengthen its health promotion efforts, and facilitate the sharing of knowledge and experiences.

35. The Subcommittee held a closed meeting in order to consider the recommendations on each Non-State Actor. Having reviewed the confidential information provided by the

Bureau, the Subcommittee decided to recommend to the Executive Committee that it approve the admission of Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids into official relations with PAHO and the continuation of official relations between PAHO and Action on Smoking and Health, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative–Latin America, the Framework Convention Alliance, the InterAmerican Heart Foundation, the Latin American Federation of the Pharmaceutical Industry, the Latin American Society of Nephrology and Hypertension, the National Alliance for Hispanic Health, and the Sabin Vaccine Institute.

36. The President announced that the Subcommittee’s recommendations would be submitted to the 168th Session of the Executive Committee in the form of a proposed resolution.

Appointment of One Member to the Audit Committee of PAHO (Document SPBA15/6)

37. Dr. Heidi Jiménez (Legal Counsel, PASB) provided a brief overview of the work of the Audit Committee and drew attention to its terms of reference, which appeared as an annex to Document SPBA15/6. Under those terms of reference, the three members of the Audit Committee were elected by the Executive Committee and served no more than two full terms of three years each. As the term of office of one member would end in June 2021, it would be necessary for the Executive Committee to fill the upcoming vacancy at its 168th session in June. In accordance with the process for identifying candidates for Audit Committee membership, the Director of PASB had updated the roster of highly qualified potential candidates to fill Audit Committee vacancies and developed a shortlist for consideration by the Subcommittee, which was asked to recommend a candidate to the Executive Committee. The relevant documentation on the candidates had been distributed to the Members of the Subcommittee.

38. The Subcommittee decided to establish a working group consisting of the delegates of Barbados, Guatemala and the United States of America to review the list of candidates proposed by the Director. Subsequently, Ms. María Eugenia Ardón Quezada (Guatemala) reported that the working group had evaluated the six proposed candidates on the basis of the criteria for membership set out in Section 4 of the Terms of Reference and had selected five critical factors for ranking them. Each member of the group had ranked each of the candidates separately, the scores had then been consolidated and the individual results averaged. Mr. Martín Guozden had been unanimously selected as the candidate to be recommended for appointment to the Audit Committee.

39. In the ensuing discussion, a delegate observed that the Audit Committee played a critical role in providing oversight of PAHO, thereby strengthening accountability and improving governance within the Organization.

40. The Director thanked the working group for its recommendation and the Members of the Subcommittee for accepting it and emphasized the importance of the Audit Committee’s function within the Organization. Mr. Guozden’s contribution during

his first term on the Committee had been invaluable, and she therefore welcomed the Subcommittee's decision to recommend his reappointment for a second term.

41. The Subcommittee endorsed the working group's recommendation. The President announced that the recommendation would be communicated to the Executive Committee.

Administrative and Financial Matters

Overview of the Financial Report of the Director for 2020 (Document SPBA15/7)

42. Mr. Xavier Puente Chaudé (Director, Department of Financial Resources Management, PASB) presented the overview of the financial report of the Director for 2020, noting that the financial statements were still being audited by the Organization's External Auditor, the National Audit Office (NAO) of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. He added that the NAO had informed the Bureau that, for internal reasons, it did not expect to complete its report until near the end of May, rather than during the first half of April, as was customary.

43. Highlighting the main trends with regard to revenue and expenditure, he reported that the Organization's total consolidated revenue in 2020 had amounted to approximately \$1.34 billion, a 12% increase with respect to 2019, due to large increases in revenue from procurement on behalf of Member States for COVID-19 supplies and extraordinary voluntary contributions for emergencies. Procurement through the Revolving Fund for Access to Vaccines (the Revolving Fund) had accounted for the largest share of procurement revenue, although revenue from the Revolving Fund for Strategic Public Health Supplies (the Strategic Fund) had risen markedly in comparison with 2019 and earlier years as a result of increased procurement of COVID-19 supplies. Program budget revenue had grown by 19%, from \$284.8 million in 2019 to \$338.7 million in 2020, owing to an 86% increase in PAHO and WHO voluntary contributions. The rise in voluntary contributions, in turn, had been due to an almost hundredfold increase in contributions related to the COVID-19 emergency.

44. Current-year assessed contributions collected in 2020 had totaled \$41.9 million, which was an improvement over 2019, when current-year assessed contributions had amounted to only \$30.2 million. Nevertheless, only about 40% of the contributions due in 2020 had been received, and the total balance outstanding at year's end had been \$84.6 million, which was about \$4 million less than in 2019 but more than double the amount outstanding in 2018, the first year of the previous biennium. The delays in payment of assessed contributions had, for the second year in a row, negatively impacted on the Bureau's ability to deliver technical cooperation and implement the Organization's program budget. As a result of the delays, the Bureau had also been obligated to use the entirety of the balance in the Working Capital Fund and to borrow from other unrestricted funds.

45. Total consolidated expenditures for 2020 had amounted to \$1.35 billion, in comparison with \$1.18 billion in 2019, an increase of 14%. Purchases of supplies,

commodities, and materials had accounted for the largest share of spending, almost all of which had been related to procurement on behalf of Member States. Staff and other personnel costs had risen from \$143.5 million in 2019 to \$181.5 million in 2020, although staff salaries and entitlements had fallen from \$134.4 million in 2019 to \$130.7 million in 2020. The increase in personnel costs was due mainly to a considerable increase in the actuarial value of the staff health insurance liability, which in turn was related to a significant drop in the discount rate. Travel expenditures had fallen sharply, from \$34.8 million in 2019 to \$9.8 million in 2020.

46. In the discussion that followed, gratitude was expressed for the Bureau's support for Member States during the pandemic, and Member States were urged to pay their assessed contributions on time, in full, and without conditions in order to enable the Bureau to continue providing that critical support. The Bureau was asked to provide more information on the steps it had taken to address the recommendations made by the External Auditor in respect of the financial report for 2019,³ in particular those related to resolving inconsistencies in the application of policies on accounting for delays in the receipt of assessed contributions, which could result in an overstatement of resources available to the Organization. The Bureau was also asked to ensure that decisions on the impairment of receivable assets were considered on the basis of objective criteria; and to enhance the financial report to provide a clearer picture of the Organization's performance, its financial health, and the outcomes achieved as a result of the use of resources.

47. The Bureau was also asked to include a greater focus on financial trends and risk management in the financial report for 2020. Concern was expressed about the fact that expenditures for 2020 had exceeded revenues by some \$11 million, and clarification was requested regarding the Organization's current liquidity situation.

48. Mr. Puente Chaudé replied that the Bureau had followed all of the External Auditor's recommendations during 2020 and in closing the accounts for the year. The Bureau had established provisions for outstanding receivables and, since the adoption of Resolution CD58.R7 in 2020, it had also been able to establish provisions relating to outstanding assessed contributions, based on objective criteria, including the age of the debt. The Bureau had taken all necessary measures to allow for outstanding receivables and to avoid incurring expenses that could not be covered with the resources actually available, although that had resulted in delays in the implementation of the program budget.

49. He emphasized that, while there had been a deficit in the overall budget, the program budget had showed no deficit. He explained that the overall deficit was an extraordinary situation due to several exceptional circumstances, including the increase in provisions for doubtful accounts, the revaluation of the health insurance liability and the Organization's real estate assets. It was expected that the deficit would be reversed in 2021. As for the Organization's liability situation, it was excellent in respect of all activities that were not part of the program budget, which had been severely affected by the delays in receipt of assessed contributions. Lastly, with respect to risk management, he noted that

³ See Official Document No. 360 (2020).

the financial report would, as usual, include a statement on internal control, with an analysis of all risks facing the Organization.

50. The Director observed that 2020 had been an extraordinary year in many aspects, both for the Bureau and for the Organization as a whole. In the face of the serious financial constraints experienced in 2019 and 2020, the Bureau had significantly reduced its staff costs and stepped up its efforts to mobilize voluntary contributions, particularly for the COVID-19 response. The success of those efforts was reflected in the financial statements. At the same time, despite the funding limitations, the Bureau had been able to continue to provide Member States with a significant level of technical cooperation in areas not related to the pandemic. Through the Strategic Fund, the Bureau had been able to respond to Member States' needs for COVID-19 supplies, while at the same time maintaining an almost normal level of procurement of regular vaccines through the Revolving Fund, a result that attested to the importance that both the Bureau and Member States placed on immunization. She emphasized that the Bureau's Executive Management took their fiduciary responsibilities very seriously and noted that monthly meetings were held with relevant managers to review and monitor expenditures, availability of funds, and liabilities in order to ensure that spending did not exceed available resources.

51. She expressed gratitude to the Member States that had paid their assessed contributions and appealed to those that had not to do so as soon as possible, so that the Bureau would be able to provide the level of technical cooperation that Member States demanded.

52. The Subcommittee took note of the report.

Update on the Appointment of the External Auditor of PAHO for 2022-2023 (Document SPBA15/8)

53. Mr. Xavier Puente Chaudé (Director, Department of Financial Resources Management, PASB) recalled that the National Audit Office (NAO) of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland had been appointed in 2017 to serve as the External Auditor of PAHO for the 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 bienniums. The appointment of the External Auditor was set to expire upon completion of its audit of the 2021 financial period. He further recalled that past practice had been to extend the appointment of the External Auditor for an additional biennium if the Auditor had discharged its mandate satisfactorily and was willing to serve for another biennium. The Organization was satisfied with the performance of the External Auditor and believed that extending its term for a third and final biennium, for the period 2022-2023, would ensure continuity and effectiveness in the audit of the Organization, especially during the current unprecedented period of telework arrangements and limited travel capabilities.

54. In accordance with established procedures, the Bureau would initiate the process of requesting nominations from Member States, Participating States, and Associate Members for an auditor of international repute to be considered by the Governing Bodies for appointment as the External Auditor of PAHO for the 2024-2025 and 2026-2027

bienniums. He called on Member States to provide nominations of qualified candidates for consideration as the next External Auditor of PAHO.

55. In the Subcommittee's discussion of the report, the high standard of excellence demonstrated by the NAO was recognized and support was expressed for its reappointment, in particular to strengthen transparency and provide continuity during the current unprecedented situation. It was pointed out, however, that best practice among international organizations was to limit the appointment of the External Auditor to a single term of between four and six years that would not be immediately renewable. It was recommended that the Audit Committee should be consulted for its views on the matter and that the Organization should continue to review its Financial Regulations with a view to establishing such term limits. It was hoped that a diverse pool of new candidates would be proposed for consideration for the 2024-2025 and 2026-2027 bienniums.

56. Mr. Puente Chaudé pointed out that the proposal to appoint the NAO for an additional biennium was effectively in line with the best practice adopted by other international organizations, since it would extend the current four-year mandate of the NAO to the six-year maximum. He reiterated that the process for a new External Auditor would begin in 2022.

57. The Director said that the Bureau had benefited significantly from the high standard of NAO's audits of the Organization and looked forward to continuing that working relationship for a further biennium.

58. The Subcommittee took note of the report.

Amendments to the PASB Staff Regulations and Rules (Document SPBA15/9)

59. Dr. Luz Marina Barillas (Director, Department of Human Resources Management, PASB) summarized the proposed changes to the Staff Rules set out in the annexes to Document SPBA15/9, which were made in the light of experience and in the interests of good human resources management and were intended to align PAHO with WHO and maintain consistency in the conditions of employment of staff of PASB with those of the United Nations Common System agencies.

60. The amendments were related to decisions taken by the United Nations General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session on the basis of recommendations by the International Civil Service Commission. The salary scale for the professional and higher categories had been revised, as a result of which a similar revision would need to be made to the salaries for the posts of Director, Deputy Director, and Assistant Director. The financial implications associated with the International Civil Service Commission's recommendation on the increase of the base/floor salary scale were estimated at approximately \$858,000 per year across the United Nations system.

61. A number of Staff Rules relating to payments and deductions had been introduced or amended to clarify, among other aspects, how the Bureau addressed or corrected

overpayments or underpayments of a staff member's salary, benefits, or pension contributions. It was further clarified that errors made in determining or recording a staff member's allowances, benefits, leave entitlement, or service time could be corrected at any time. Amendments had also been made to specify the duration of parental leave for staff members on temporary appointments serving at a non-family duty station and to stipulate that applicants to vacant general service posts must be citizens or permanent legal residents of the country of the duty station.

62. In the ensuing discussion, clarification was sought regarding the financial impact of the changes to the Staff Rules, the revisions to salaries, and the increased pension and health insurance liabilities. Clarification was also sought as to whether implementation of the recommendations of the International Civil Service Commission was compulsory or whether the Organization could opt out in the light of its current financial situation. The Bureau was requested to provide information on the financial implications of salary increases over the past six years. The Bureau was also asked to conduct an analysis of the impact of Resolution CESS1.R2, concerning the current financial situation and adjustments to the Organization's strategic priorities, and to carry out a review of the organizational structure of the Bureau and of the salaries of Executive Management, for consideration by the Executive Committee.

63. In response, Dr. Barillas explained that the Bureau was obligated to implement the International Civil Service Commission's recommendations and that the financial impact of the salary adjustments would be very small, amounting to approximately \$11,000 per year. She emphasized that the changes to the salary scale had been made through the standard consolidation method of increasing the base/floor salary while commensurately decreasing post-adjustment multipliers for all duty stations, thereby resulting in no-loss/no-gain in net take-home pay. In the event that the Organization no longer wished to align its salaries with those of the United Nations system, an exhaustive impact assessment would need to be conducted, not least because there would be legal implications with regard to existing staff contracts. She had taken note of the information requested for inclusion in the report to be submitted to the Executive Committee.

64. Mr. Gerald Anderson (Director of Administration, PASB) pointed out that the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund was responsible for the payment of pension benefits to all staff in the United Nations system and that PAHO therefore had no liabilities in that regard. Contributions to the pension fund were paid by the Organization as a proportion of a staff member's salary and were therefore part of its annual staffing costs. He affirmed that the impact of salary-scale adjustments over the past six years had been minimal, since modifications had been made on a no-loss/no-gain basis, adding that the Bureau would provide the requested impact analysis; in the meantime, Member States could find details on personnel costs in the annual financial reports of the Director, which were available on the PAHO website.

65. The Subcommittee took note of the report.

PASB Human Resources Management (Document SPBA15/10)

66. Ms. Mary Lou Valdez (Deputy Director, PASB) introduced the report on human resources management, explaining that, in addition to the Member State working group established in 2020 by the Executive Committee pursuant to Resolution CESS1.R2, an internal steering committee had been created by the Director to examine the Bureau's major functions and structural elements. The recommendations of the steering committee now formed the basis of 20 organizational development initiatives (ODIs) aimed at improving the Organization's operational and resource efficiency and supporting the implementation of its strategic priorities. Several ODIs related to human resources management and were aimed at strengthening the Organization's management of staff, including by improving the working environment and strengthening career development. An oversight committee had been set up to coordinate and oversee all ODI initiatives and support the Bureau's Executive Management in monitoring and highlighting issues requiring action.

67. Dr. Luz Marina Barillas (Director, Department of Human Resources Management, PASB) presented Document SPBA15/10, which summarized the most important initiatives undertaken in the sphere of human resources in 2020. The report also contained statistics on the various categories of staff, the gender distribution of staff, the age and length of service of staff, and retirement trends. She provided an overview of the Bureau's revised human resources strategy for the period 2020-2025, known as "the People Strategy 2.0," which incorporated high-priority activities from the previous iteration of the strategy and ODIs related to human resources in support of the implementation of the Organization's Strategic Plan 2020-2025. The People Strategy 2.0 was built on three main pillars—functional optimization, innovation, and agility—designed to optimize resource efficiency, identify and bridge skills gaps, promote career development, nurture talent and diversity, and foster greater adaptability, among other objectives.

68. She noted that, as soon as the COVID-19 pandemic had been declared, the Bureau had prioritized the development of procedures and protocols to prevent or minimize staff exposure to COVID-19. An Emergency Telework Standard Operating Procedure had been launched for all duty stations to facilitate business continuity while protecting the health, safety, and well-being of all PAHO personnel. Administrative guidelines on the COVID-19 outbreak had also been published, information sessions had been held, and counseling services had been made available to support PAHO personnel.

69. As far as talent management was concerned, in the light of the financial situation, the Bureau had evaluated the options available for the targeted, temporary recruitment of personnel, including the utilization of the Junior Professional Officers program, United Nations Volunteers, and the services of professionals from PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centers. In that connection, in 2020 there had been a noticeable decrease in fixed-term and temporary appointments and an increase in the use of consultants, largely due to the need to respond to the pandemic. Dr. Barillas pointed out that, although there had been a decrease in the proportion of women appointed to international professional and national officer roles in 2020, that trend had already been reversed in the first few months of 2021. While women occupied 51% of all fixed-term professional posts throughout the

Organization, there was still room for improvement at the P4 level and above. A mentoring program had been introduced for staff members on the roster of PAHO/WHO representatives (PWRs) with a view to improving the gender balance among PWRs and promoting succession planning.

70. Members of the Subcommittee voiced support for the development of the new People Strategy 2.0 and welcomed its alignment with the Organization's strategic priorities. It was noted with satisfaction that the Bureau had sought the objective review and recommendations of the External Auditor on human resources matters and that the report included a section on the management of staff misconduct. The Bureau was requested to provide more information on the roadmap and budget for the People Strategy 2.0 and on the indicators being used to track progress. Concern was expressed about the types of contractual mechanisms being used by the Bureau as a result of the Organization's financial situation, and the Bureau was asked to indicate whether any mitigation strategies had been put in place to manage the risks associated with using contingent workers to carry out core functions or provide technical cooperation. The use of junior professional officers, volunteers, and other collaborators to supplement the PASB workforce was welcomed, but the need to put in place a strategic framework for that purpose was emphasized, as was the need to protect data and preserve institutional memory.

71. Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, delegates expressed appreciation for the measures that had been taken to protect and support PASB staff and maintain business continuity. Further information was requested regarding the organization of work onsite, the criteria put in place to limit onsite work by staff at higher risk of serious illness, and the lessons learned from the teleworking arrangements utilized during the pandemic. Further clarification was sought regarding the cases of COVID-19 that had occurred among PASB staff. The Bureau was asked to supply data on cases among staff disaggregated by country office, provide details on the support or medical follow-up offered to affected staff, and outline the insurance eligibility criteria for consultants hired in the context of the COVID-19 response.

72. Subcommittee Members acknowledged the Bureau's efforts to attain gender parity, but emphasized that additional efforts were necessary to achieve that goal, especially for posts at the P5 level and above. The inclusion of gender parity in the Bureau's succession and retirement planning was applauded. The Bureau was urged to increase its outreach and to consider all appropriately qualified women for relevant vacancies arising from the 138 retirements expected over the next five years. Information on the findings of a special gender-based review of positions held by senior management staff coming up for retirement, and on efforts to preserve institutional memory, was requested.

73. Dr. Barillas explained that the roadmap for the implementation of the People Strategy 2.0 employed a results-based approach and included 12 main activities, each with an estimated budget allocation, and indicators to determine the progress being made. Although the past year had been a challenging time, the Organization had the advantage of being able to leverage economies of scale in certain areas to achieve the objectives of the People Strategy 2.0. With regard to the increased reliance on consultants and other

contingent workers, she pointed out that the financial constraints faced by the Bureau meant that no new fixed-term staff could be recruited. As a result, consideration was being given to utilizing junior professional officers and United Nations volunteers with the required experience, skills, and competencies for vacant posts. In response to concerns raised by Member States, a new policy on the hiring and selection of consultants was being prepared.

74. With regard to working arrangements during the pandemic, the protection of PASB staff had been taken very seriously. Access to PAHO buildings had been tightly controlled, with entry permitted only for essential personnel. Lists of essential workers had been drawn up for Headquarters and country offices. On gender parity, she noted that one of the activities included in the People Strategy 2.0 focused specifically on women's advancement and on bolstering efforts to attain gender parity, in particular at the P5 and D1 levels. She assured delegates that the Bureau was making every effort in that regard, bearing in mind the financial and human resources it had at its disposal.

75. Many lessons had been learned from the pandemic and the unprecedented financial crisis. A business continuity plan and incident management teams had already been established prior to the pandemic, and thus the necessary platforms to enable teleworking had already been in place. The success of those working arrangements would no doubt feed into an update to the policy on teleworking once a return to the office environment was possible. Similarly, knowing that a difficult financial situation had been on the horizon, the Bureau had adopted a prudent approach and implemented certain measures, including a freeze on recruitment, which had enabled it to weather the worst of the crisis and make cost savings wherever it could. One of the lasting effects of that dire financial period was that the Bureau would continue to be very critical about how it filled vacant positions.

76. Mr. Gerald Anderson (Director of Administration, PASB) emphasized that the Bureau had been well-positioned to move to virtual working arrangements during the pandemic. In doing so, it had become clear that a number of internal and external cooperation activities could be accomplished in a virtual setting. It was therefore possible that, in the future, the Organization would be able to realize cost savings by carrying out certain activities virtually. In addition, it was unlikely that travel would return to pre-pandemic levels, meaning that cost savings were possible there too. Lastly, the more effective use of online media and the holding of regular press conferences during the pandemic had enabled the Organization to improve its communication with the public in Member States and reach larger audiences than ever before. Efforts would therefore be made to further develop those capabilities in the post-pandemic era.

77. The Subcommittee took note of the report.

Update on the Master Capital Investment Fund (Document SPBA15/11)

78. Ms. María Teresa Angulo (Director, Department of General Services Operations, PASB) presented an update on the status of the Master Capital Investment Fund and implementation of the Master Capital Investment Plan. Recalling that the Master Capital

Investment Fund comprised five subfunds, she noted that Document SPBA15/11 provided details of each of them for 2020, including their net balances. She reported that, as of 31 December 2020, the overall balance of the Master Capital Investment Fund had stood at \$19,746,027, which included an allocation of \$4,650,520.21 from the 2018-2019 biennium surplus. The balance in the Reserve for the Master Capital Investment Fund had been \$2 million at the end of 2020.

79. The utilization of the Real Estate Maintenance and Improvement Subfund and the Vehicle Replacement Fund had slowed markedly during 2020 as a result of the prioritization of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the Information Technology Subfund, integrated electronic medical records software had been purchased, while the appraisal of 12 PAHO-owned properties at Headquarters and country offices had been carried out under the Revolving Strategic Real Estate Subfund. The Human Resources Strategy Subfund had been earmarked to cover expenses related to the implementation of talent and recruitment modules and, thus, had not been utilized at all in 2020 due to the recruitment freeze (see paragraph 75 above).

80. The Master Capital Investment Plan for PAHO Headquarters had been updated to include the capital investment requirements for the building at 2121 Virginia Avenue. There had been a reduction in net operating expenses as a result of the purchase of 2121 Virginia Avenue in 2019 and the cessation of office space rental. Compared to 2019, net savings of \$678,119 had been achieved in 2020, while net savings of \$774,609 were projected for 2021.

81. In the ensuing discussion, a delegate welcomed the report and the fact that the Organization had realized cost savings through its acquisition of the Virginia Avenue building.

82. The Director noted that the Organization continued to implement the Master Capital Investment Plan for building maintenance and to utilize the Master Capital Investment Fund in a manner that would further contribute to the financial liquidity of the Organization.

83. The Subcommittee took note of the report.

Update on the Working Capital Fund (Document SPBA15/12)

84. Mr. Xavier Puente Chaudé (Director, Department of Financial Resources Management, PASB) introduced Document SPBA15/12 and explained that the purpose of the Working Capital Fund was to cover gaps in the cash deficits caused by delays in the receipt of assessed contributions. He recalled that the 58th Directing Council had approved an increase in the authorized level of the Working Capital Fund to \$50 million, although it had only been funded to \$28.7 million as of 31 December 2020. As a result of unpaid assessed contributions in the amount of \$84.6 million, the Organization had been forced to utilize the full \$28.7 million in the Working Capital Fund and a further \$17 million from

additional unrestricted resources, such as the Special Fund for Program Support, in order to cover a net cash deficit of \$45.7 million.

85. In the discussion that followed, delegates voiced their support for the use of Working Capital Fund to cover temporary shortfalls in the payment of assessed contributions. Concern was expressed about the high level of unpaid assessed contributions, which had led to the depletion of the Fund and which, in turn, could have a negative impact on the sustainability of program implementation. It was emphasized that Member States should pay their contributions in full and on time to enable the Organization to continue providing support, especially at such a critical time as the COVID-19 pandemic. The Delegate of the United States of America indicated that his Government intended to pay the balance of its assessed contribution for 2020 in short order.

86. The Bureau was asked to indicate whether it envisaged any long-term challenges associated with fully funding the Working Capital Fund, and, if so, what action it intended to take in that regard. A delegate pointed out that, between 2014 and 2020, the authorized level of the Working Capital Fund had increased significantly, while assessed contributions had remained stable and the amount of unpaid contributions each year had been relatively constant. It was suggested that the Bureau should conduct an in-depth analysis, for consideration by the Governing Bodies, to identify whether any programmatic or other issues had increased the Organization's budgetary requirements and had therefore partly contributed to the additional burden being placed on the Working Capital Fund.

87. Mr. Puente Chaudé pointed out that, while unpaid contributions at the end of each year had historically stood at around \$40 million, the Organization had faced an unprecedented shortfall of over \$80 million for two years running, in 2019 and 2020.

88. The Director said that the Bureau would make every effort to produce an in-depth analysis ahead of the 168th Session of the Executive Committee, as requested. She emphasized, however, that the assessed contributions due from Member States had remained stable since the 2012-2013 biennium, which, in real terms, actually translated into a significant reduction to the Organization's overall financing. When combined with the late or non-payment of assessed contributions, that placed the Organization in considerable difficulty when it came to funding program costs.

89. The Subcommittee took note of the report.

Matters for Information

Report on Strategic Issues between PAHO and WHO (Document SPBA15/INF/1)

90. Mr. Dean Chambliss (Director, Department of Planning, Budget, and Evaluation, PASB) introduced the report, noting that it was presented in response to a request by Member States for periodic updates on strategic issues of relevance to the relationship between PAHO and WHO. Summarizing some of the topics highlighted in the report, he said that PAHO continued to work closely with WHO on the implementation and

monitoring of the GPW13 results framework. He pointed out that WHO had proposed an extension of the deadline for achieving the GPW13 “triple billion” target to 2025, a change that would bring the PAHO and WHO strategic planning frameworks into temporal alignment. Regarding financing, he reported that during the current 2020-2021 biennium the Region had received total funding of \$123.2 million from WHO as of 11 February 2021, including \$90.3 million in flexible funds and \$32.9 million in voluntary contributions. This had resulted in a financing gap of 43% with respect to the approved WHO allocation to the Americas, the largest gap among all the WHO regional offices.

91. Mr. Chambliss recalled that there had been extensive debate during the 148th Session of the WHO Executive Board in January 2021 regarding sustainable financing of WHO, which had resulted in the establishment of an open-ended intergovernmental working group on sustainable financing with the objective of enabling WHO to have the robust structures and capacities needed to fulfill its core functions. The working group had recently begun its work, and PAHO would support regional deliberations to contribute to that work.

92. PAHO and WHO continued to collaborate on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. PAHO’s response strategy had been fully aligned with the WHO Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan; it had been involved in the rollout and use of WHO-managed platforms, including the COVID-19 Partners Platform and the COVID-19 Supply Chain System; and PAHO was actively supporting participation in the COVAX Facility by Member States in the Americas.

93. The Subcommittee applauded PAHO’s support for Member States during the COVID-19 pandemic and its close coordination with WHO on the response. Appreciation was expressed for the Organization’s efforts to support the participation of Member States in the COVAX Facility and for its work as a procurement partner in the Facility. PAHO was encouraged to continue working closely with WHO, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and other global partners to ensure rapid and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for the countries of the Region and to mitigate risks relating to vaccine distribution. The Bureau was asked to indicate what support was being provided to countries that would receive COVID-19 vaccines free of charge through the COVAX Facility, but that would be required to cover transport, insurance, and other costs. The Bureau was also asked to provide more information on the steps were being taken to ensure representation of countries of the Americas in COVAX governance mechanisms.

94. PAHO’s engagement with the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response (IPPR) was welcomed. The need to ensure that the regional perspective was considered in the Panel’s work was underscored, as was the need for continued alignment between PAHO and WHO in the effort to translate the outcomes and lessons learned from the various global reviews at the regional level. The Subcommittee also welcomed the decision by the WHO Executive Board to establish a working group on sustainable financing. The Bureau was asked to provide information on the regional deliberations to

be conducted in that regard and on its efforts to close the gap between the funding allocated by WHO to the Region and the funding actually received.

95. It was suggested that the report to be presented to the Executive Committee in June 2021 would provide more strategic analysis of areas of opportunity for coordination between PAHO and WHO, with a greater focus on the results of such collaboration. It was also suggested that more information should be provided on the implementation of the GPW13 and on WHO transformation initiatives in the Region. An update on the alignment between the GPW13 and the Sustainable Health Agenda for the Americas 2018-2030 (SHAA2030) was requested.

96. Mr. Chambliss pointed out that the GPW13 results framework had begun to approach its final form only in 2020, whereas the SHAA2030 had been adopted in 2017. Nonetheless, both the framework and the SHAA2030 were solidly rooted in the health-related Sustainable Development Goals, and the Bureau believed that they were strongly aligned, particularly at the level of impact and outcome indicators. Member States would be consulted if any adjustments were considered necessary.

97. With regard to the implementation of WHO transformation initiatives in the Region, he recalled that PAHO had implemented changes selectively, since PAHO had carried out transformation efforts of its own that predated those of WHO. Hence, PAHO had, for example, restructured its Health Emergencies Department in alignment with the restructuring of WHO's Health Emergencies Program, but the Bureau had not been restructured to mirror the new structure of the WHO Secretariat.

98. On the issue of the sustainable financing of WHO, Mr. Chambliss reiterated that the activities of the working group set up by the Executive Board were just beginning and noted that the working group would hold its first meeting in late March 2021. No regional consultations had been scheduled as yet, but the Bureau would monitor the working group's deliberations and organize such consultations as and when requested by Member States. Regarding efforts to close the funding gap in the Region, he reported that the Bureau was actively involved in the work of the WHO Resource Allocation Committee and output delivery teams and had seen some hopeful signs in terms of the allocation of voluntary contributions.

99. Dr. Jarbas Barbosa (Assistant Director, PASB) noted that the Director had continually emphasized the need for more equitable distribution of available COVID-19 vaccines. While PAHO, together with UNICEF, served as a procurer of vaccines, it was not involved in the COVAX mechanism that made decisions about vaccine allocation—although the Bureau had repeatedly stressed that it should be. Nevertheless, when the Bureau was notified of allocation decisions, it immediately entered into discussions with suppliers, and it was holding almost daily meetings with producers with a view to accelerating vaccine production. For the 10 countries in the Region that were eligible for the COVAX Advanced Market Commitment, the Bureau had assisted in drawing up their national vaccination plans and provided support on various facets of those plans, including

importation, communications, training of personnel, and supply of syringes and other materials.

100. Dr. Barbosa observed that the experience of the pandemic and the COVAX Facility had underlined the need to be better prepared for future pandemics and to put in place mechanisms to ensure equitable and uninterrupted access to supplies, equipment, and vaccines. He also stressed the need to maintain public health measures such as physical distancing and the use of masks, since vaccination would not have an immediate effect in terms of limiting transmission of the virus or reducing cases of COVID-19.

101. The Director affirmed that the Bureau was increasing its level of collaboration with WHO through both joint planning and the contribution of regional experience and expertise, not only to WHO Headquarters but also to other regional offices. The Bureau saw the COVAX Facility as an expression of multilateral solidarity and, as such, had considered it the best mechanism for ensuring access to vaccines for all countries. For that reason, it had not sought to obtain COVID-19 vaccines directly through the Revolving Fund but rather had opted to work through COVAX to cover the initial 20% of vaccine needs in the Region. She continued to believe that was the right approach, although she acknowledged that there had been some challenges because PAHO had not had a role in critical decision-making bodies within the Facility and consequently some decisions had been made without a thorough understanding of the nuances of the situation in the Region. The Bureau would continue to advocate for a greater role for PAHO in COVAX decision-making.

102. She assured the Subcommittee that ensuring equitable access to vaccines was a high priority for the Bureau and that it was taking steps to promote solidarity and sharing of vaccines among countries and to obtain vaccines at better prices through the Revolving Fund, with a special focus on meeting the needs of smaller countries that faced higher prices because they purchased smaller amounts. She added that the Bureau was already looking at how to ensure access beyond the initial 20%, including by working with partners within the inter-American system to enhance production capacity in the Region. She pointed out that, while accelerating vaccine distribution was important, it was equally important to ensure the safety and efficacy of any vaccine purchased. For that reason, the PAHO Revolving Fund would continue to purchase only vaccines that had been approved by WHO for emergency use listing. Echoing Dr. Barbosa's comments, she emphasized the need to maintain proven public health measures, which, together with vaccination, would enable countries to reach herd immunity.

103. The Subcommittee took note of the report.

Report on the Status of the Emergency Loan from the Revolving Fund for Access to Vaccines to the Regional Revolving Fund for Strategic Public Health Supplies (Document SPBA15/INF/2, Rev. 1)

104. Dr. James Fitzgerald (Director, Department of Health Systems and Services, PASB) recalled that Resolution CESS1.R1, adopted by the Executive Committee in May

2020, had authorized to provide an emergency loan consisting of a short-term, limited, rolling transfer of funds, up to a maximum of \$50 million, from the Capital Account of the Revolving Fund for Access to Vaccines to the Capital Account of the Regional Revolving Fund for Strategic Public Health Supplies. Document SPBA15/INF/2 reported on the status of the loan and on actions taken to facilitate Member States' access to critical COVID-19 supplies.

105. Following the adoption of Resolution CESS1.R1, the number of countries requesting use of the Strategic Fund capital account had increased by 45% and total cumulative utilization of the capital account had grown by 66%. As a result of the increased use, the balance in the Strategic Fund capital account had risen to \$24.6 million. The capital account has been effectively managed to support Member States without requiring the use of the emergency loan during 2020. However, in January 2021 the emergency loan provision had been applied to support one Member State's request for the emergency acquisition of medicines required for critical care management of COVID-19 patients.

106. In order to continue to meet the urgent demands of PAHO Member States during the pandemic and facilitate rapid access to essential medicines and public health supplies for COVID-19, the Bureau was seeking Member States' approval of an extension of the internal emergency loan provision until 31 December 2023, under same conditions as approved by Member States in Resolution CESS1.R1.

107. The Subcommittee expressed support for the proposed extension but emphasized the need to ensure that any loans made from the capital account of the Revolving Fund to the capital account of the Strategic Fund would not jeopardize Member States' ability to procure both COVID-19 vaccines and vaccines for routine immunization through the Revolving Fund. Clarification was requested regarding the controls in place to ensure that the capital account of the Revolving Fund was not negatively affected and that any loans were reimbursed on a timely basis. In that connection, it was suggested that the document should include a prospective analysis of anticipated demand for COVID-19 vaccines and the impact of that demand on the capitalization of the Revolving Fund. Delegates also sought clarification of the rationale for the extending the loan provision to the end of 2023 rather than, for example, the end of 2022.

108. Dr. Fitzgerald was asked to explain how the procurement process worked and how the Bureau ensured timely reimbursement from Member States to which a line of credit was extended. He was also asked to clarify whether \$50 million was the maximum amount of each loan or the total maximum amount of funding that could be transferred from the Revolving Fund to the Strategic Fund up to the end of 2023. The need to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Strategic Fund was emphasized, and information was requested on plans to ensure that Fund's self-reliance.

109. Dr. Fitzgerald assured the Subcommittee that any loans from the Revolving Fund to the Strategic Fund would not in any way affect vaccine procurement for regular immunization programs or the scheduling of vaccine procurement for the COVAX Facility. Regarding the controls in place, he explained that when a country requested a line of credit,

the request was reviewed on the basis of available funds and any outstanding payments due from the requesting country before approval. The Bureau then followed up with the Member State to ensure reimbursement. If insufficient credit was available in the Strategic Fund, the Bureau looked at the overall credit available for both the Strategic Fund and the Revolving Fund and determined, based on analysis of future orders from the two funds and of the outstanding balances due from Member States, whether it was possible to access funding from the Revolving Fund as an emergency loan. Those analyses were carried out on a monthly basis before any decisions were made. At the same time, the Bureau work closely with Member States to reprogram orders and reschedule delivers in order to avoid the need for emergency loans. Just-in-time management of ordering processes, alignment with the PASB Management Information System (PMIS), and the use of multimodal transport (combining air and sea transport) also contributed to effective management of lines of credit and use of the emergency loan provision.

110. As for the maximum amount available for emergency loans, he explained that loans were authorized on a case-by-case basis, based on the Bureau's review of available credit. The \$50 million maximum was not a single amount that had been transferred from the Revolving Fund to the Strategic Fund. As to why the Bureau had requested an extension of the loan provision to the end of 2023, he noted that demand for critical care medicines for intensive care units was expected to remain high throughout 2022 and possibly into 2023. In order to ensure that it could rapidly respond to Member States' needs, the Bureau therefore wished to extend the loan provision to the end of 2023.

111. The Subcommittee endorsed the proposal to extend the emergency loan provision to the end of 2023.

Draft Provisional Agenda for the 168th Session of the Executive Committee (Document SPBA15/INF/3)

112. Ms. Mônica Zaccarelli Davoli (Senior Advisor, Governing Bodies Office, PASB) presented the draft provisional agenda for the 168th Session of the Executive Committee, which reflected revisions made to the list of topics examined by the Executive Committee during its 167th Session.⁴ She recalled that, at that Session, the Bureau had been encouraged to reconsider the topics for the Governing Bodies in 2021 and to present an agenda with a greater focus on the response to and lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, also taking into account the Organization's pressing financial situation. The list of topics had therefore been revised and submitted to Members of the Executive Committee in a note verbale in December 2020. The draft provisional agenda presented in Document SPBA15/INF/3 reflected the revised list, which had been endorsed by the Executive Committee.

113. The agenda included five policy documents and one strategy, which the Bureau considered highly relevant to the current context of the pandemic response and the post-pandemic period. An update on the COVID-19 situation in the Region would also be

⁴ See Final Report of the 167th Session of the Executive Committee, Document CE167/FR (2020).

presented. In addition, the agenda included the customary items considered by the Executive Committee at its June sessions, including all the items considered by the Subcommittee at its 15th Session, and a set of final and progress reports mandated by previously adopted resolutions.

114. In the discussion that followed, delegates expressed appreciation to the Bureau for revising the provisional agenda in line with the recommendations made by the Executive Committee. It was suggested that provision should be made in the agenda for discussion of the regional implications of the various global review initiatives currently taking place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, including those being undertaken by the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response (IPPR), the Review Committee on the Functioning of the International Health Regulations (2005) during the COVID-19 Response, and the WHO Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee; in addition, there should be an analysis of the implications and impacts of the World Health Assembly resolution to be adopted in May 2021 on strengthening WHO preparedness and response to health emergencies. It was also suggested that, in the interests of enhancing the efficiency of the Governing Bodies' deliberations and making the best use of the Organization's human and financial resources, items 4.3 (Roadmap for the Digital Transformation of the Health Sector in the Region of the Americas) and 4.4 (Policy on the Application of Data Science in Public Health Using Artificial Intelligence and Other Emerging Technologies) might be combined.

115. Clarification was requested regarding the intent of item 4.5 (Increasing Production Capacity for Essential Medicines and Health Technologies). It was pointed out that increasing capacity for the production of essential medicines and health technologies was beyond the purview of the health sector, and the need to limit the scope of the item to matters that fell within the responsibility of the health sector was emphasized. Lastly, it was requested that the progress and final reports under "Matters for Information" should be presented for information purposes only, but should not be discussed during the session, as had been done with the reports presented to the 58th Directing Council in 2020.

116. Ms. Zaccarelli Davoli said that information on global review initiatives could be included in the report on strategic issues between PAHO and WHO (item 7.2) and/or the report on implementation of the International Health Regulations (item 7.5). The suggestion of presenting progress and final reports for information purposes could be offered as a recommendation to the Executive Committee, which was the body that would approve the agenda. Regarding the possibility of combining items 4.3 and 4.4 and the request for clarification concerning item 4.5, the responsible technical managers were invited to provide information.

117. Dr. Sebastián García Saiso (Director, Department of Evidence and Intelligence for Action in Health, PASB), addressed the comments regarding items 4.3 and 4.4. He explained that the aim was to provide a general roadmap for improving capacity to analyze and use available health information more effectively and creating an environment for strengthening decision-making in the health sector through better analysis, incorporating new technologies. That in turn would lead to the development of a policy

that would enable public health authorities to have more robust evidence for decision-making, using artificial intelligence and other technologies, such as big data analytics.

118. Dr. James Fitzgerald (Director, Department of Health Systems and Services, PASB), referring to item 4.5, explained that evidence accumulated through the Bureau's work with ECLAC and Member States indicated that the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean remained heavily dependent on imports of medicines and medical supplies from outside the region, which had led to major problems in ensuring access to critical supplies and medicines during the pandemic. The document on item 4.5 would be a policy document that put forward some proposals for intersectoral action between the health, science and technology, and industrial sectors to increase intraregional production capacity and strengthen supply chains for critical supplies, including vaccines, so that in future public health emergencies Latin America and the Caribbean would be in a position to meet regional needs.

119. The Director observed that, while items 4.3 and 4.4 were related, they were two separate items, and she would therefore suggest that they not be combined. Regarding item 4.5, she pointed out that it was important for ministers of health to be involved in developing strategies for stimulating the action needed to ensure self-sufficiency in essential medicines and technologies. As for analyzing the regional implications of the various global review processes under way, she noted that it would be necessary to wait until after that World Health Assembly in May. An analysis could then be included in the report on issues between PAHO and WHO.

120. The Subcommittee endorsed the provisional agenda, with the modifications suggested by Members during the discussion.

Other Matters

121. The Director recalled that in 2013 PAHO had agreed to provide technical cooperation to the Government of Brazil in support of its Mais Médicos Program, which sought to strengthen that country's health care infrastructure and address a critical shortage of primary health care personnel by bringing in physicians from several countries, including Argentina, Cuba, Portugal, Spain, and Uruguay. As a result, 60 million Brazilians gained access to primary health care, many for the first time. PAHO's support for the Program had ended in 2018. Shortly thereafter, four Cuban doctors who had left the Mais Médicos Program and came to the United States, sued the Organization in the U.S. federal court, making a number of unfounded allegations against PAHO for its participation in the Program. The Director advised that the lawsuit is ongoing.

122. In July 2020, at the request of a Member State, the Director initiated an administrative Review of the Bureau's work in support of the Mais Médicos Program. The Review had focused solely on the technical cooperation activities of the Bureau, not decisions or actions of any Member States. The Member States that drafted the terms of reference for the Review, with the participation of the Bureau, recognized that maintaining

confidentiality was essential because of the pending lawsuit. It was therefore agreed that the Review would be conducted externally by a Washington, D.C.-based law firm. The Director advised that she was recently briefed by members of the law firm on the outcome of the Review. The firm had offered a number of recommendations that reinforced existing policies, rules, and procedures for the management of extrabudgetary projects, including with regard to project approval, implementation and risk management. Those recommendations also reflected recent decisions taken by Member States regarding extrabudgetary initiatives.⁵

123. The Director advised that she was extremely satisfied with the law firm's recommendations and would take the necessary steps to continue strengthening the Bureau's policies and practices so that it would be even better positioned to support the public health initiatives of Member States in the future. She stated that she took great pride in the work and the transparency of the Organization and wished she could share more information about the Review with Member States at that time; however, the findings must remain confidential until the lawsuit is resolved.

Closure of the Session

124. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the President declared the 15th Session of the Subcommittee closed.

Annexes

⁵ See Resolution CD58.R3 (2020).

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the President of the Fifteenth Session of the Subcommittee on Program, Budget, and Administration, Delegate of Uruguay, and the Secretary *ex officio*, Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, sign the present Final Report in the Spanish language.

DONE in Washington D.C., United States of America, this twenty-six day of March in the year two thousand twenty-one. The Secretary shall deposit the original signed document in the Archives of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau. The Final Report will be published on the website of the Pan American Health Organization once approved by the President.

Daniel Salinas
President of the 15th Session
of the Subcommittee on Program, Budget,
and Administration
Delegate of Uruguay

Carissa F. Etienne
Secretary *ex officio* of the 15th Session
of the Subcommittee on Program, Budget,
and Administration
Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau

Annex A

AGENDA

1. OPENING OF THE SESSION

2. PROCEDURAL MATTERS

- 2.1 Election of Officers
- 2.2 Adoption of the Agenda

3. PROGRAM POLICY MATTERS

- 3.1 Outline of the Program Budget of the Pan American Health Organization 2022-2023
- 3.2 Scale of Assessed Contributions for 2022-2023
- 3.3 Engagement with non-State Actors
- 3.4 Non-State Actors in Official Relations with PAHO
- 3.5 Appointment of One Member to the Audit Committee of PAHO

4. ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

- 4.1 Overview of the Financial Report of the Director for 2020
 - 4.2 Update on the Appointment of the External Auditor of PAHO for 2022-2023
 - 4.3 Amendments to the PASB Staff Regulations and Rules
 - 4.4 PASB Human Resources Management
 - 4.5 Update on the Master Capital Investment Fund
 - 4.6 Update on the Working Capital Fund
-

5. MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

- 5.1 Report on Strategic Issues between PAHO and WHO
- 5.2 Report on the Status of the Emergency Loan from the Revolving Fund for Access to Vaccines to the Regional Revolving Fund for Strategic Public Health Supplies
- 5.3 Draft Provisional Agenda for the 168th Session of the Executive Committee

6. OTHER MATTERS

7. CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

Annex B

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Working Documents

SPBA15/1	Agenda
SPBA15/2	Outline of the Program Budget of the Pan American Health Organization 2022-2023
SPBA15/3	Scale of Assessed Contributions for 2022-2023
SPBA15/4	Engagement with non-State Actors
SPBA15/5	Non-State Actors in Official Relations with PAHO
SPBA15/6	Appointment of One Member to the Audit Committee of PAHO
SPBA15/7	Overview of the Financial Report of the Director for 2020
SPBA15/8	Update on the Appointment of the External Auditor of PAHO for 2022-2023
SPBA15/9	Amendments to the PASB Staff Regulations and Rules
SPBA15/10	PASB Human Resources Management
SPBA15/11	Update on the Master Capital Investment Fund
SPBA15/12	Update on the Working Capital Fund

Information Documents

SPBA13/INF/1	Report on Strategic Issues between PAHO and WHO
SPBA13/INF/2, Rev. 1	Report on the Status of the Emergency Loan from the Revolving Fund for Access to Vaccines to the Regional Revolving Fund for Strategic Public Health Supplies
SPBA13/INF/3	Draft Provisional Agenda for the 168th Session of the Executive Committee

Annex C

OFFICERS/MESA DIRECTIVA

President/Presidente:	Dr. Daniel Salinas (Uruguay)
Vice-President/Vice-Presidente:	Mtro. Marcos Cantero Cortes (Mexico)
Rapporteur/Relator:	Licda. María Eugenia Ardón Quezada (Guatemala)

MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE/MIEMBROS DEL SUBCOMITÉ

BARBADOS

Lt. Col. Hon. Jeffrey D. Bostic
Minister of Health and Wellness
Ministry of Health and Wellness
St. Michael

Dr. Janet Phillips
Permanent Representative
Ministry of Health and Wellness
St. Michael

Dr. Kenneth George
Chief Medical Officer
Ministry of Health and Wellness
St. Michael

Mrs. Reeshemah Cheltenham Niles
Director (Ag.) Planning and Research
Ministry of Health and Wellness
St. Michael

CANADA/CANADÁ

Ms. Lucero Hernández
Manager
Multilateral Relations Division
Office of International Affairs for the
Health Portfolio
Government of Canada, Ottawa

Ms. Charlotte McDowell
Senior Development Officer and Alternate
Representative of Canada to the
Organization of American States
Washington, D.C.

Ms. Jennifer Izaguirre
Policy Analyst
Office of International Affairs for the
Health Portfolio
Government of Canada, Ottawa

CANADA/CANADÁ (cont.)

Mr. William Wang
Policy Analyst
Multilateral Relations Division
Office of International Affairs for the
Health Portfolio
Government of Canada, Ottawa

Ms. Marissa de la Torre Ugarte
Policy Analyst
Global Affairs Canada
Inter-American Program
Government of Canada, Ottawa

ECUADOR

Mg. Fernando Roberto Jácome Gaviláñez
Director Nacional de Cooperación y
Relaciones Internacionales
Ministerio de Salud Pública
Quito

Ing. Luisa Noboa
Analista de Cooperación y
Relaciones Internacionales
Ministerio de Salud Pública
Quito

GUATEMALA

Licda. María Eugenia Ardón Quezada
Asesora
Ministerio de Salud y Asistencia Social
Guatemala

Licda. María Eugenia Morales Ramírez
Representante del Viceministerio
Administrativo Financiero
Ministerio de Salud y Asistencia Social
Guatemala

MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE/MIEMBROS DEL SUBCOMITÉ (cont.)

GUATEMALA (cont.)

Dra. Norma Lucrecia Ramírez Sagastume
de Castellanos
Viceministra Técnica
Ministerio de Salud y Asistencia Social
Guatemala

Dra. Nancy Pezzarossi de Calderón
Viceministra Administrativa y Financiera
Ministerio de Salud y Asistencia Social
Guatemala

MEXICO/MÉXICO

Dr. Jorge Carlos Alcocer Varela
Secretario de Salud
Secretaría de Salud
México, D.F.

Mtro. Marcos Cantero Cortes
Titular de la Unidad de Análisis Económico
Secretaría de Salud
México, D.F.

Lic. Martha Leticia Caballero Abraham
Encargada de la Dirección General de
Relaciones Internacionales
Secretaría de Salud
México, D.F.

Mtra. Araceli Camacho Chairez
Directora de Políticas de Aseguramiento
en Salud
Secretaría de Salud
México, D.F.

Lic. José Gustavo Valle Mendoza
Subdirector de Gestión Interamericana
Secretaría de Salud
México, D.F.

Lic. Maite Narvaéz Abad
Segunda Secretaria, Representante Alternativa
de México ante la Organización de los
Estados Americanos
Washington, D.C.

MEXICO/MÉXICO (cont.)

Sra. Zulema Guerra
Jefa de Departamento para el
Sistema Interamericano
Secretaría de Salud
México, D.F.

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA/ESTADOS
UNIDOS DE AMÉRICA**

Ms. Adriana Gonzalez
Health Advisor
Office of Economic and Development
Assistance
Bureau of International Organization Affairs
Department of State
Washington, D.C.

Ms. Mara Burr
Director Multilateral Relations
Department of Health and Human Services
Washington, D.C.

Ms. Gabrielle Le
Health Team Intern
Office of Economic and Development
Affairs
Bureau of International Organization Affairs
Department of State
Washington, D.C.

Ms. Maya Levine
Senior Global Health Officer for
Multilateral Relations
Office of Global Affairs
Department of Health and Human Services
Washington, D.C.

Ms. Marcela Lievano-Martinez
Global Health Officer, Americas
Office of Global Affairs
Department of Health and Human Services
Washington, D.C.

MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE/MIEMBROS DEL SUBCOMITÉ (cont.)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA/ESTADOS UNIDOS DE AMÉRICA (cont.)

Mr. Gilbert Morton
Senior Advisor
Office of Management Policy and Resources
Bureau of International Organization Affairs
Department of State
Washington, D.C.

Ms. Leandra Olson
Senior Global Health Officer, Multilateral Relations
Office of Global Affairs
Department of Health and Human Services
Washington, D.C.

Mr. James P. Shuster
Program Analyst
Office of Management, Policy and Resources
Bureau of International Organization Affairs
Department of State
Washington, D.C.

Ms. Ann Blackwood
Senior Health Advisor
Cherokee Nation Federal
Arlington, VA

URUGUAY (cont.)

Dr. Daniel Salinas
Ministro de Salud Pública
Ministerio de Salud Pública
Montevideo

Dr. Miguel Asqueta
Director General de Salud
Ministerio de Salud
Montevideo

Mag. Gabriela Gómez
Directora de Relaciones Internacionales
Ministerio de Salud
Montevideo

Lic. Luis Galicia
Coordinador de las Áreas Programáticas
Ministerio de Salud
Montevideo

Cr. Julio Busson
Asesor de Ministro y Subsecretario
Ministerio de Salud
Montevideo

Dra. Alicia Arbelbide
Ministra Consejera, Representante Alternativa de Uruguay ante la Organización de los Estados Americanos
Washington, D.C.

**NON-MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE
OTROS MIEMBROS QUE NO FORMAN PARTE DEL SUBCOMITÉ**

ARGENTINA

Dra. Carla Moretti
Directora Nacional de Relaciones Internacionales
Ministerio de Salud
Buenos Aires

Dra. Gabriela Ramírez
Asesora
Dirección Nacional de Relaciones Internacionales
Ministerio de Salud
Buenos Aires

ARGENTINA (cont.)

Lic. Georgina Grigioni
Asesora
Dirección Nacional de Relaciones Internacionales
Ministerio de Salud
Buenos Aires

Lic. Andrea Polach
Asesora
Dirección Nacional de Relaciones Internacionales
Ministerio de Salud
Buenos Aires

NON-MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE (cont.)
OTROS MIEMBROS QUE NO FORMAN PARTE DEL SUBCOMITÉ (cont.)

ARGENTINA (cont.)

Lic. Clara Zerbino
Directora de Estrategias de Financiamiento
Ministerio de Salud
Buenos Aires

BRAZIL/BRASIL

Excmo. Fernando Simas Magalhães
Embaixador, Representante Permanente do
Brasil junto à Organização dos Estados
Americanos
Washington, D.C.

Sr. Gabriel Boff Moreira
Ministro Conselheiro, Representante
Alternativo do Brasil junto à Organização dos
Estados Americanos
Washington, D.C.

Sra. Maria Clara de Paula Tusco
Primeira Secretária, Representante Alternativa
do Brasil junto à Organização dos
Estados Americanos
Washington, D.C.

Sr. Jackson Luiz Lima Oliveira
Primeiro Secretário, Representante Alternativo
do Brasil junto à Organização dos
Estados Americanos
Washington, D.C.

Sra. Indiara Meira Gonçalves
Analista Técnica para Assuntos
Multilaterais da Assessoria de
Assuntos Internacionais
Ministério da Saúde
Brasília

COLOMBIA

Excmo. Sr. Alejandro Ordoñez
Embajador, Representante Permanente
de Colombia ante la Organización de los
Estados Americanos
Washington

COLOMBIA (cont.)

Sra. Adriana Maldonado
Ministra Consejera, Representante
Alternativa de Colombia ante la Organización
de los Estados Americanos
Washington, D.C.

Sra. Paola M. Bernal
Coordinadora de Cooperación
y Relaciones Internacionales
Ministerio de Salud y Protección Social
Bogotá

Sra. Ximena Valdivieso
Coordinadora de Asuntos Sociales
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Bogotá

Sra. Grecia Saray Umbarila Vélez
Asesora, Grupo de Cooperación y
Relaciones Internacionales
Ministerio de Salud y Protección Social
Bogotá

Sra. Carolina Schlesinger
Segunda Secretaria, Representante
Alternativa de Colombia ante la Organización
de los Estados Americanos
Washington, D.C.

Sr. Luis Hernán Hincapié Matoma
Asesor, Coordinación de Asuntos Sociales
Dirección de Asuntos Económicos, Sociales
y Ambientales
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Bogotá

Sr. Cristian Perea
Tercer Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores
Coordinación de Asuntos Sociales
Dirección de Asuntos Económicos, Sociales
y Ambientales
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Bogotá

NON-MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE (cont.)
OTROS MIEMBROS QUE NO FORMAN PARTE DEL SUBCOMITÉ (cont.)

COSTA RICA

Sra. Adriana Salazar González
Jefe de Relaciones Internacionales
Ministerio de Salud
San José

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC/REPÚBLICA
DOMINICANA**

Dr. Edward Guzmán
Viceministro de Planificación y Desarrollo
Ministerio de Salud Pública
Santo Domingo

Dra. Indhira Guillén
Encargada del Departamento de
Cooperación Internacional
Ministerio de Salud Pública
Santo Domingo

JAMAICA

Dr. Bryan Dustan
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Health and Wellness
Kingston

Dr. Howard Lynch
Director
Policy, Planning and Development
Ministry of Health and Wellness
Kingston

JAMAICA (cont.)

Dr. Andre Poyse
Policy Coordinator
Ministry of Health and Wellness
Kingston

NICARAGUA

Dr. Christian Toledo
Director General de Vigilancia para la Salud
Ministerio de Salud
Managua

PERU/PERÚ

Dra. Marita de los Ríos Guevara
Especialista en Gestión Pública
Ministerio de Salud
Lima

**TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO/TRINIDAD Y
TABAGO**

Ms. Anita Sohan
Director, International Cooperation Desk
Ministry of Health
Port-of-Spain

OBSERVER STATES/ESTADOS OBSERVADORES

SPAIN/ESPAÑA

Excma. Sra. Carmen Montón
Embajadora, Observadora Permanente de
España ante la Organización de los
Estados Americanos
Washington, D.C.

**PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
ORGANIZACIÓN PANAMERICANA DE LA SALUD**

**Director and Secretary *ex officio* of the
Subcommittee/
Directora y Secretaria *ex officio* del
Subcomité**

Dr. Carissa F. Etienne
Director/Directora

**Advisers to the Director/
Asesores de la Directora**

Ms. Mary Lou Valdez
Deputy Director/Directora Adjunta

Dr. Jarbas Barbosa da Silva Junior
Assistant Director/Subdirector

**Advisers to the Director/
Asesores de la Directora (cont.)**

Mr. Gerald Anderson
Director of Administration
Director de Administración

Dr. Heidi Jiménez
Legal Counsel/Asesora Jurídica

Ms. Mônica Zaccarelli Davoli
Senior Advisor, Governing Bodies Office
Asesora Principal, Oficina de los Cuerpos
Directivos

- - -