Pan American Health Organization

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**WELCOMING REMARKS BY DR. JARBAS BARBOSA DA SILVA JR.,
DIRECTOR OF THE PAN AMERICAN SANITARY BUREAU**

28 September 2026

Senator the Honorable Mrs. Lisa Cummins, Minister of Health and Wellness of Barbados, Outgoing President of the Directing Council;

Honorable Dr. Jayanta Bhattacharya, Director of the National Institutes of Health of the United States of America;

Honorable Ambassador Steve Ferrol, Permanent Representative of Dominica, Chair of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States;

Honorable Mr. Ilan Goldfajn, President of the Inter-American Development Bank;

Distinguished Ministers of Health, Ambassadors, delegations, and colleagues.

It is my honor to welcome you to the 63rd Session of the Directing Council of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

For more than 120 years, PAHO has worked with countries across the Americas to make yesterday's impossible the reality of today.

Diseases that once claimed thousands of lives have been eliminated or are close to elimination.

Children are protected by vaccines against diseases their parents feared.

Health systems are better equipped to detect threats, respond to emergencies, and protect communities.

In public health, success is often measured by what does not happen. There may be no dramatic headlines, but a life may be saved, a family spared, and a community protected because a disease was prevented or an outbreak contained.

Every day, PAHO supports countries in protecting and improving the health of their populations. Our Region continues to serve as a model for others worldwide. This afternoon, I will have the opportunity to share the Region's significant recent achievements with you.

We are strengthening primary health care, improving vaccination, expanding digital health, preventing and controlling outbreaks, reducing deaths from chronic diseases, and advancing disease elimination.

Yet the resurgence of measles reminds us that our work is far from finished. We must continue strengthening surveillance, vaccination, and outbreak response. We must also accelerate progress in maternal, newborn, child, and mental health, while strengthening preparedness for public health emergencies.

At the same time, we must remain focused on advancing universal health and addressing critical challenges, including the persistent shortage of health workers throughout the Americas.

This Directing Council provides a valuable opportunity to shape our collective response to these challenges and strengthen actions to improve health across the Region.

Lasting public health progress is not delivered to countries. It is built with countries, and it starts here.

Before turning to the substance of this meeting, I would like to draw Member States' attention to an issue that underpins everything we do: the financial sustainability of our Organization.

Last year, we proposed, and our Member States approved, a 19% budget reduction. Despite prioritization efforts, cost-containment measures, and the strong mobilization of additional voluntary contributions, we still face a funding gap for our core programs.

This is not simply a budgetary challenge. It affects our ability to provide technical cooperation, respond to emerging health threats, and sustain essential operations across the Region. For this reason, the timely and full payment of assessed contributions remains indispensable to ensuring that the Organization remains strong, responsive, and capable of delivering on its mandate.

I would like to sincerely thank the 31 Member States that have already made full or partial payments in 2026 and respectfully invite all Member States to complete their contributions as soon as possible. I also want to thank our partners and donors for their fundamental support in advancing the priority agenda in our Region. Governments, philanthropies, and financial institutions have partnered with us around the priorities established by our Member States. Our partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank is advancing the implementation of the Pan-American Highway for Digital Health (PH4H), which seeks to enhance digital collaboration, eliminate healthcare barriers, and provide seamless access to clinical information across borders. Thirteen countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are benefiting from the Alliance for Primary Health Care established by PAHO, the IDB, and the World Bank. And these are a few of the many strong partnerships we have established in recent years.

We continue to pursue more efficient ways to deliver our technical cooperation by expanding the use of virtual platforms, streamlining internal processes, and strengthening transparency and accountability through the publication of internal audit reports, external evaluations, and their implementation plans.

These measures reflect our commitment to using resources effectively and responsibly. We remain accountable for every penny entrusted to us by Member States and partners in support of work that saves lives and improves health across the Region.

A strong and sustainable Organization is not an end in itself. It is the foundation that enables us to support countries, respond to emerging challenges, strengthen health systems, and improve health outcomes for all people of the Americas.

As we look to the future, evidence must remain at the center of our decisions. It is therefore my privilege to launch the latest Health in the Americas, PAHO's flagship publication since 1954.

The new edition asks a fundamental question: where can we achieve the greatest gains in health? Nearly 40% of the Region's disease burden is potentially avertable. Much of it is linked to cardiovascular disease, diabetes and kidney disease, maternal and neonatal disorders, violence and injuries, substance use disorders, and respiratory infections, including tuberculosis.

We know what works. The challenge is turning evidence into action. The report highlights five key capacities for success: strategic leadership, data-driven decision-making, strong partnerships, aligned financing and regulation, and accountability.

I encourage you to explore the report through the QR code on your tables and visit the Health in the Americas stand during the week.

I would now like to present the agenda of this Directing Council, which includes key issues for advancing the Region's health priorities.

We will discuss the report of the end-of-biennium assessment of the PAHO Program Budget 2024–2025, which presents the results achieved by the close of the biennium, together with the final report on the implementation of the PAHO Strategic Plan 2020–2025, which includes results, financial implementation, risks, lessons learned, and measures taken to strengthen efficiency, transparency, and accountability.

We will consider the proposed resolution on Strengthening and Alignment of the Regional Revolving Funds of the Pan American Health Organization. It is aimed at consolidating the Revolving Fund for Access to Vaccines and the Regional Revolving Fund for Strategic Public Health Supplies into a more efficient, flexible, and sustainable mechanism that expands timely access to health technologies and strengthens one of the most important public health tools in the Americas.

The PAHO Regional Revolving Funds contribute to the implementation of regional public health priorities, such as disease elimination. Countries can access new technologies in vaccines, medicines, and diagnostics at affordable prices. For example, for cervical cancer elimination, countries have access through the Regional Revolving Funds to vaccines, human papillomavirus (HPV) molecular tests, and equipment to treat lesions in primary care. The Regional Revolving Funds enable accelerated access to innovations and contribute to strengthening regional production of health technologies.

In addition, the Strategy for Strengthening Health Emergency and Risk Management for Health Security 2026–2031 will be presented. It is aimed at strengthening national capacities and regional collaboration to improve health security in the Americas.

We will discuss the Plan of Action on Antimicrobial Resistance 2027–2031, which seeks to strengthen the regional response to this growing threat through evidence-based actions to improve antimicrobial governance, surveillance, prevention, and appropriate use.

We will review the Integrated Management Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Arboviral Diseases 2026–2035, aimed at strengthening prevention, early detection, and response to dengue and other arboviruses through improved surveillance, diagnosis, clinical management, and vector control.

An update will be provided on the implementation of the Shared Services Hub, an essential component of the PAHO Forward initiative, aimed at making the Organization's administrative functions more efficient and agile. The project is progressing as planned, and the Shared Services Hub is expected to be fully operational in the second half of 2026. The investment is expected to be recouped in less than a year, while providing more efficient administrative services and generating significant savings for the Organization.

I would also like to invite you to participate in the four briefing sessions scheduled for this week, which will address key issues for the future of health in the Americas: digital transformation, primary health care, disease elimination, and global health governance.

I invite you to visit the exhibits showcasing a range of initiatives and technical cooperation opportunities related to maternal mortality, the HEARTS in the Americas initiative, telehealth and telemedicine, the Virtual Campus for Public Health, the use of scientific evidence, and many others. Of course, the Pan American Sanitary Bureau will be available to answer your questions and comments, and to support your participation.

To conclude, I would like to recall that this Organization was born of a powerful idea: Pan-Americanism. The conviction that we are stronger when we work together and more effective when we move forward with a common purpose. The Region of the Americas must continue to lead innovation in public health and actively contribute to shaping the global health agenda.

The Pan American Health Organization is here to work alongside you, but also to challenge you. Because making possible what today seems impossible requires us to think differently, innovate, and adapt our responses to new realities. Our role is to promote new ideas and strategies, share best practices, and help countries turn innovation into better health outcomes.

If the history of public health in the Americas has taught us anything, it is that when we work together, we can make what seems impossible today a reality.

Thank you very much, muchas gracias, muito obrigado, merci beaucoup.

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