Pan American Health Organization

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CLOSING REMARKS BY DR. JARBAS BARBOSA DA SILVA JR.
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Hon. Dr. May Chomali Garib, Minister of Health of Chile, President of the 63rd Directing Council of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). I congratulate the Minister of Health of Chile for her calm leadership, for her constant reminders of the importance of the issues under discussion, and for helping us to stay focused on the agenda that we set for ourselves;

Hon. Mr. Michael Joseph, Minister of Health, Wellness, Environment and Civil Service Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda, and distinguished Dr. Yelkys Gil, National Director of Public Health of Panama, Vice-Presidents of this session;

Distinguished Ms. Christine Harmston, Director General of the External Relations Directorate of Health Canada, and President of the 178th Session of the Executive Committee. Thank you very much for your leadership, for guiding the session of the Executive Committee in June, and for your valuable contribution through all the reports you have presented;

Distinguished Rapporteur, Dr. Cherita Moxey, Senior Officer of the Policy and Planning Unit at the Ministry of Health and Wellness of the Bahamas, who has contributed to the smooth conduct of all our discussions;

Our Deputy Director, Ms. Mary Lou Valdez, for her role as Secretary of the Governing Bodies meetings of PAHO;

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

It is an honor for me to bring the 63rd Directing Council of PAHO to a close. I would like to thank each of you for your participation, your leadership, and your commitment to improving the health of the peoples of the Americas.

This week we have done what this Council does best: we have listened, we have debated, we have learned from one another, and together we have helped shape the path that public health will take in our Region. Over the past few days, we have addressed some of the most pressing challenges facing our countries.

Important resolutions were discussed and adopted to strengthen health emergency preparedness, advance the response to antimicrobial resistance, improve the prevention and control of dengue and other arboviral diseases, and reaffirm the importance of food safety.

In addition, a resolution was adopted to ensure that our Region is better prepared to face current and future threats.

You also reviewed and approved ways to strengthen and modernize PAHO's Regional Revolving Funds, one of the clearest expressions of Pan-American solidarity. Thanks to these mechanisms, countries continue to expand access to vaccines, medicines, diagnostics, and other essential health technologies that save lives every day throughout our Region.

We discussed the Amendments to the Terms of Reference for the Audit Committee of PAHO, which provide guidance on the functioning of the Organization's financial controls, reporting structures, risk management processes, and other audit-related controls.

We also discussed the Amendments to the Rules Governing the Election Process for the Position of Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, with the aim of modernizing the electoral framework, strengthening procedural consistency, and reinforcing Member States' confidence in the process, without altering the constitutional framework or the authority of PAHO's Governing Bodies.

We also reflected on our achievements, our challenges, and the resources needed to ensure that PAHO remains a strong, efficient, transparent, and responsive Organization that meets the needs of its Member States.

Beyond the formal agenda, the briefing sessions highlighted the remarkable wealth of good practices across the Americas. We exchanged experiences on digital transformation, primary health care, and disease elimination. These discussions reminded us that innovation is already happening across the Region, and that we move forward faster when we learn from one another.

This week, we also had time to celebrate.

We marked the 50th anniversary of the PAHO Health Emergencies Program, celebrating five decades of dedicated support to countries as they prepare for, respond to, and recover from some of the most complex emergencies our Region has faced. For 50 years, the program that is now our Department of Health Emergencies has helped countries strengthen their capacities, protect their populations, and save lives when support was needed most.

We also celebrate the achievements of the five countries that have received disease elimination certificates in the past year. These recognitions are much more than milestones—they are proof of what can be accomplished when political commitment, strong health systems, scientific evidence, and sustained cooperation come together.

Their success should inspire us all. I hope that each year we can come together to celebrate more countries reaching elimination targets and demonstrating what the Americas can achieve through collective action.

I also want to thank the many ministers of health, health authorities, ambassadors, and delegations who met with me throughout the week. Those conversations, even the informal ones over coffee, are among the most important moments of every Directing Council.

They give me the opportunity to better understand the realities of each country, the progress being made, and the obstacles that remain. Every country has its own context and its own priorities. Most importantly, they remind us that effective cooperation begins with listening.

Let me assure you: we have listened, we have heard your concerns, we have heard your priorities, we have heard about your ambitions for the future.

The resolutions and decisions adopted during this Directing Council will guide our work in the years ahead. But their true value will not be measured by what was approved only in this room, it will be measured by what changes in the lives of the people we serve.

The Pan American Health Organization remains committed to working alongside you. We are here to support you, to learn with you, and to help translate challenges into opportunities for better health.

Throughout this week, we have seen once again that the diversity of our Region is one of our greatest strengths. No country has all the answers. Together, we possess an extraordinary wealth of experience, expertise, and creativity. That is why partnership matters, that is why dialogue matters, and that is why this Directing Council matters. A Region that continues to inspire other regions not only through what it says but through what it achieves.

As we leave this Directing Council, let us keep the dialogue alive, exchanging ideas, learning from one another, and engaging in the constructive debate that strengthens our decisions and our institutions.

The spirit of Pan-Americanism that inspired this Organization more than a century ago remains as important today as ever. The conviction that we are stronger when we work together and more effective when we pursue a common purpose must continue to guide us.

The doors of PAHO, the house of health of the Region of the Americas, will always remain open to you. You are always welcome here.

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

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