

## 60th DIRECTING COUNCIL

### 75th SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE OF WHO FOR THE AMERICAS

Washington, D.C., USA, 25–29 September 2023

---

*Provisional Agenda Item 8.11-C*

CD60/INF/11(C)

11 August 2023

Original: Spanish

## SUBREGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

### Introduction

1. Subregional technical cooperation is supported by Resolution CD45.R6 on the Regional Program Budget Policy, adopted by the 45th Directing Council of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) in 2004. After adopting the resolution, subregional technical cooperation was included in PAHO's Budget Policy (Document CD57/5) to promote stronger collaboration between PAHO and integration processes in three subregions: the Caribbean, Central America, and South America.

2. The Pan American Sanitary Bureau (the Bureau) provides technical cooperation to the subregional integration entities mentioned below. There is a biennial work plan for each subregion, with corresponding human resources and budget allocations. These biennial work plans are aligned with the outcomes and outputs of the PAHO Strategic Plan 2020–2025 and are regularly monitored, with reporting every six months.

3. The objective of this document is to inform Member States about public health-related agreements and resolutions emanating from the integration mechanisms since the last report, presented in 2022, within the framework of the subregional integration processes of interest to PAHO's Governing Bodies. This document also covers progress made on activities that were part of cooperation agreements between PAHO and subregional integration entities.

### Caribbean Integration Entities

#### *Caribbean Community*

4. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is a grouping of 20 countries: 15 Member States and five Associate Members. It was founded in July 1973 with the signing of the Treaty of Chaguaramas, which establishes a structure consisting of organs, bodies, and institutions. The relationship between PAHO and CARICOM is defined by a memorandum of understanding signed in 1983.

---

5. The PAHO Subregional Program Coordination Office for the Caribbean is the Organization's main interlocutor with CARICOM. Through policy-making support and technical cooperation offered to various organizations and partners at the subregional level, PAHO is helping to improve the health situation in the Caribbean, in accordance with the PAHO Strategic Plan 2020–2025 and the PAHO Program Budget 2022–2023, and through regional collaboration instruments such as the Caribbean Health Cooperation Initiative (phase IV).

*Conference of Heads of Government*

6. Between July 2022 and February 2023, two regular meetings of the CARICOM Conference of Heads of Government were held. They are listed in chronological order below.

7. The 43rd regular meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government was held from 3 to 5 July 2022 in Paramaribo (Suriname) and was chaired by Suriname. The Heads of Government addressed the following topics:

- a) Regarding COVID-19:
  - i. Multilateral financial institutions recognize the urgent need to assist Member States to strengthen social safety nets following the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - ii. Responsible individual behaviors, vaccination, strengthened health systems, and continued and enhanced vigilance were essential to successfully navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - iii. Measures were put in place to reduce the impact of COVID-19 considering the incidence of long COVID, which could result a significant increase in the prevalence of chronic illness and disability and could potentially further overwhelm the health sector.
  - iv. The post-pandemic period presents an opportunity to restructure health care services and public health programs using lessons learned during the pandemic.
- b) Regarding advancement of the CARICOM agri-food systems agenda:
  - i. The Heads of Government received an update on the progress made by the Ministerial Task Force on Food Production and Food Security in advancing the CARICOM Agri-food Systems Agenda, to address current food security challenges and rising food prices, and to achieve Vision 25x2025: reducing by 25% the cost of food imports by 25% by 2025.

- ii. It was noted that a majority of Member States have set their national targets, which will contribute to the attainment of the 25 goals of Vision 25x2025 and have presented them to the ministerial working group.
  - iii. The Heads of Government commended the President of Guyana for the success of the CARICOM Agri-Investment Forum and Expo held in Guyana and endorsed the Action Plan and Outcome Statement of the event. The Statement called for priority actions to be centered around four main areas: food insecurity, regional transportation, trade barriers, and women and youth in agriculture.
- c) Regarding climate change, the Heads of Government:
- i. Called for the simplification and streamlining of access criteria across donors and multilateral funds to accelerate the financing of climate initiatives in the Region, considering the special circumstances of Small Island Developing States.
  - ii. Agreed to adopt a strategic program of action to scale up climate finance to build resilient economies and societies.
  - iii. Called for early adoption and implementation of a climate vulnerability and resilience framework, to improve access to more bilateral and multilateral climate finance by Small Island Developing States, such as those in CARICOM, which bear the greatest impact of climate change.
  - iv. Acknowledged the Caribbean Development Bank's Recovery Duration Adjustor model and requested that the model be considered by the meeting of the Council of Finance and Planning in August 2022.
8. The 44th regular meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government was held from 15 to 17 February 2023 in Nassau (Bahamas) and was chaired by the Bahamas. The Heads of Government addressed the following topics:
- a) In relation to health emergencies and communicable diseases, the Heads of Government:
- i. Recognized the need for a comprehensive response to COVID-19, mpox, and other regional health security threats, including the re-emergence of Zika, the ongoing threat of dengue and other vector borne diseases, low vaccine uptake, and the associated challenges of the regular Expanded Program on Immunization.
  - ii. Noted reports of low receipt of surveillance data from Member States, which could hinder early detection and response to threats in the Region. Member States were urged to remain vigilant, continue active surveillance, and promote the use of established prevention and control guidelines to curb further spread of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.

- iii. Recognized the need to allocate adequate resources to vector control programs in order to curtail the spread of Zika in the Region.
  - iv. Agreed to support the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) in the launch of its vaccine campaign to improve COVID-19 vaccination levels, and to support the regular activities of the Expanded Program on Immunization.
- b) In relation to the Pandemic Fund, the Heads of Government:
- i. Welcomed the World Bank's establishment of the Pandemic Fund to finance critical initiatives aimed at strengthening pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response capacities at national, regional, and global levels, with a focus on low- and middle-income countries. Member States were strongly encouraged to submit Expressions of Interest to access the fund during the first round of the process.
- c) In relation to NCDs, the Heads of Government:
- i. Expressed concern at the continuing prevalence of chronic noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and stressed the importance of sustained efforts to address them.
- d) In relation to societal violence, the Heads of Government:
- i. Mandated that the Council for National Security and Law Enforcement (CONSLE) and the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) meet to prepare a special symposium on societal violence as a public health concern.

*Council for Human and Social Development*

9. The 43rd meeting of the COHSOD was held from 23 to 25 September 2022 in Washington, D.C. (United States). The main points of discussion and decisions were as follows:

- a) *The COVID-19 pandemic, the monkeypox outbreak, and access to vaccines.* The meeting was asked to note the significant decline in the childhood vaccination coverage and recognize the Caribbean's exposure to the significant risk of measles importation; and to commit to identifying and implementing innovative and creative ways of managing COVID-19 and monkeypox without negatively impacting the human resources and activities of the Expanded Program on Immunization.
- b) *Updates on regional initiatives to address the Port of Spain Declaration on Noncommunicable Diseases.* Ministers heard a report on the regional progress towards tobacco control under the World Health Organization Framework

Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), which underlined the limited progress in the implementation of cost-effective tobacco control measures in line with the WHO FCTC in this subregion. The lack of data on the tobacco epidemic in the Caribbean highlighted the need to strengthen health surveillance systems. Support was called for at the highest political level to accelerate the adoption and implementation of effective and comprehensive measures to reduce tobacco use. There was agreement to work towards the prohibition of production, importation, distribution, sale, and use of partially hydrogenated oils in CARICOM Member States. A commitment was made to develop a policy position and to work towards putting in place regulations and legislation banning partially hydrogenated oils by December 2024. The meeting mandated the Inter-Governmental Working Group on Unhealthy Diets and Obesogenic Food Environments, with support from PAHO and other collaborating partners and countries, to assist Member States in their plans to eliminate partially hydrogenated oils from the Region's food supply by 31 December 2025.

- c) *Health system matters.* The Caribbean Cardiac Society presented a national capacity self-assessment tool for the management of acute myocardial infarction. Additionally, PAHO submitted a draft questionnaire on the provision and financing of health care in the Caribbean Community.
- d) *Strengthening human resources for health (HRH).* Ministers received updates on the implementation of a policy brief on interventions to strengthen HRH response to health emergencies, including the COVID-19 pandemic and emerging pandemics in the Caribbean. The Ministers called for the establishment of the permanent Commission on Human Resources for Health in the Caribbean, a collaborative effort between PAHO and CARICOM to build on the successes of its predecessor, the HRH Action Task Force.
- e) *Antimicrobial resistance (AMR).* Member States were also informed of the implementation of action plans to address antimicrobial resistance. New AMR challenges will urgently require the strengthening of all AMR prevention and containment interventions, as well as new tools and access to and evaluation of new drugs.

10. The 29th Special Meeting of COHSOD, on health, was held on 26 April 2023 in the Bahamas. The main matters discussed were:

- a) *The status of COVID-19 and other matters related to the health security of CARICOM.* Ministers received the latest updates on COVID-19, immunization coverage, and disease elimination efforts. They approved the Declaration of Nassau: Reinvigorating the National Immunization Programs of the Caribbean, on occasion of the 21st Annual Vaccination Week in the Americas. They also collectively pledged to maintain regional targets for the control or elimination of various diseases and to develop policies and strategies aimed at addressing vaccine hesitancy.

- b) *Matters pertaining to the Port of Spain Declaration on NCDs.* Ministers received updates on the Caribbean Moves initiative and on regional mental health legislation.
- c) *Strengthening human resources for health.* A report on the migration of health care workers was provided. Ministers deliberated on the need to address this critical issue. They called for a regional discussion on ways to tackle the situation and to create better training opportunities for the health care workforce.
- d) *Ways of addressing antimicrobial resistance.* Ministers emphasized the need to scale up and strengthen capacity for AMR diagnosis and surveillance in the Caribbean.

### **Central American integration entities**

#### ***Central American Integration System***

11. The Central American Integration System (SICA) is the institutional integration framework of the Central American region. It was established on 13 December 1991 under the Protocol to the Charter of the Organization of Central American States (OCAS), or Tegucigalpa Protocol, signed by the States of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. Belize (2000) and the Dominican Republic (2013) joined later as full members.

12. SICA operates through various organs and secretariats. PAHO/WHO, through the Subregional Program for Central America, cooperates with several of its initiatives, especially those related to health, environment, social affairs, municipalities and communities, education, Afrodescendant populations, and indigenous populations. Most PAHO technical cooperation with SICA is jointly implemented with the Executive Secretariat of the Council of Ministers of Health of Central America and the Dominican Republic (SE-COMISCA), the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD, Spanish acronym), and the Central American Parliament.

#### ***Council of Ministers of Health of Central America and the Dominican Republic***

13. The Council of Ministers of Health of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMISCA) is part of SICA, and its purpose is to identify and prioritize health issues in the subregion. COMISCA normally convenes every six months and is the main subregional forum for analysis, deliberation, and presentation of proposals by the health ministers. Its current strategic plan, the Health Plan of Central America and the Dominican Republic 2021–2025, maintains a vision focused on social determinants of health, achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the population approach, health promotion, integrality, and intersectorality, in a manner consistent with the provisions of the Health Agenda of Central America and the Dominican Republic 2019–2030, highlighting issues such as the environment, climate change, cross-border risks, and social participation, among others.

14. The Health Cooperation Strategy for Central America and the Dominican Republic 2019–2025, signed by PAHO and SE-COMISCA, is a medium-term vision that guides PAHO’s technical cooperation with the subregion.

*Regular Meetings of the Council of Ministers of Health*

15. The 57th Regular Meeting of COMISCA was held on 1–2 December 2022, with the Dominican Republic assuming the pro tempore presidency. The following resolutions were adopted:

- a) COMISCA Resolution 09–2022. Approving the technical guidelines for access to contraceptive methods in the context of sexual and reproductive health for adolescents in Central America and the Dominican Republic.
- b) COMISCA Resolution 10–2022. Instructing the technical bodies and programs regarding human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection of the ministries of health of the SICA Member States to complete, between January 2023 and December 2028, the process of institutionalizing good practices in relation to HIV infection.
- c) COMISCA Resolution 12–2022. Approving the Strategy on Medicines and Other Health Technologies for Central America and the Dominican Republic 2023–2027.
- d) COMISCA Resolution 13–2022. Approving the Harmonized List of Medicines, 10th version, for processes related to the COMISCA Joint Negotiation.
- e) COMISCA Resolution 14–2022. Approving the 2023–2025 action plan of the health promotion strategy in the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.
- f) COMISCA Resolution 15–2022. Instructing SE-COMISCA, in collaboration with PAHO, to support SICA Member States in measuring the performance of essential public health functions, applying a methodology at the subregional level, in order to strengthen national health systems in Central America and the Dominican Republic.

16. On 22–23 June 2023, the 58th Regular Meeting of COMISCA was held in San Pedro (Belize), under the pro tempore presidency of the host country. The agenda included a virtual intervention by PAHO Director Dr. Jarbas Barbosa, while the ad interim Director of the Subregional Program for Central America represented PAHO at the meeting in person. During this session, the pro tempore presidency was transferred from Belize to El Salvador, which will hold office until December 2023. Several resolutions were also approved, including the following:

- a) *COMISCA Agreement 01-2023*. Authorizes SE-COMISCA to negotiate and sign, on behalf of COMISCA, a contract with the Uppsala Monitoring Centre in Sweden for the use of the WHODrug Global dictionary in the FACEDRA regional pharmacovigilance system.

- b) *COMISCA Resolution 02-2023*. Concerning the development of the Regional Strategic Plan for Tuberculosis in Central America and the Dominican Republic.
- c) *COMISCA Resolution 03-2023*. Concerning the sustainability of the public health national reference laboratories of the SICA Member States.
- d) *COMISCA Resolution 04-2023*. Approves regional guidelines on risk communication in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era and for other public health emergencies in Central America and the Dominican Republic.
- e) *COMISCA Resolution 05-2023*. Approves the *Strategy for equity and equality in health between women and men in Central America and the Dominican Republic 2023-2030*.
- f) *COMISCA Resolution 06-2023*. Approves the development and strengthening of the Regional Observatory on Clinical Trials in Central America and the Dominican Republic.
- g) *COMISCA Resolution 07-2023*. Recognizes the COMISCA Joint Negotiation facility as a Regional Community Public Good of the SICA health sector.

### ***Central American Commission on Environment and Development***

17. CCAD was established with the mission of developing a regional cooperation and environmental integration regime that contributes to improving the quality of life of the population in its Member States. Its areas of work focus on environmental governance, and it is responsible for coordination of the SICA Regional Environmental Framework Strategy 2021–2025 and the Regional Strategy on Climate Change. Regarding health and the environment, PAHO and CCAD have been working jointly to put together a strategic plan on air quality, climate change, and health.

18. During the pro tempore presidency of Belize, in the first semester of 2023, CCAD, with support from PAHO, implemented the first phase of the Regional Integrated Programme on Climate Change, Air Quality, and Health for Central America. Within this context, baselines for the state of air quality in Central America and the Dominican Republic were defined, with their corresponding regulatory frameworks; an integrated roadmap on climate change, air quality, and health was established for the SICA region; and communication materials were prepared for dissemination in English and Spanish.

19. In early July 2023, at the CCAD headquarters within the SICA facility, the pro tempore presidency was formally transferred from Belize to El Salvador, which will hold this office until December 2023.

20. On 26 October 2022, the 67th Special Meeting of the Council of Ministers of CCAD was held in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic). During this meeting, PAHO presented the progress made by the Central American Regional Integrated Program on Climate Change, Air Quality, and Health, which led to the following agreements:



- a) Request that the Executive Secretariat of CCAD carry out the pertinent coordination to convene a course for regional, national, and subnational decision-makers on the economic, social, and health impacts of air quality, with a launch scheduled for November 2022.
- b) Request that the Executive Secretariat of CCAD provide support in the coordination of the necessary actions to prepare an action plan on climate change, air quality, and health.

***Project on temporary labor migration in Central America***

21. A project seeking to characterize the movement dynamics and living conditions of temporary migrant workers within the SICA Member States and opportunities to improve the health of these populations is being implemented jointly by SE-COMISCA, the Confederation of Associations of Municipalities in Central America and the Caribbean, and, on behalf of PAHO, the Subregional Program for Central America. This project promotes a strategic, intersectoral approach to the challenges faced by the migrant population engaged in temporary cross-border agricultural labor in the Central American subregion. Obtaining additional information on the characteristics of this sector of the population, including data relating to their working conditions and access to services, will facilitate the development of appropriate policies to meet their health needs. Implementation of this initiative promotes cooperation between countries for health development as well as South-South cooperation, both nationally and locally.

**Central American Parliament**

22. The Central American Parliament is the SICA body charged with planning, analysis, and advisory duties, according to the powers set forth in its constitutive treaty and current protocols. It also proposes legislation in different areas related to health, and thus constitutes a venue for the advancement of the public health agenda in the subregion.

***Mesoamerica Integration and Development Project***

23. The Mesoamerica Integration and Development Project, or Mesoamerica Project, is a mechanism created by 10 Mesoamerican countries (Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama). Its purpose is to strengthen regional integration and promote economic and social development in the participating countries. The Mesoamerica Project operates through the joint work of the permanent presidency, held by Mexico, and the rotating semi-annual pro tempore presidencies of the other countries. Colombia will become president pro tempore of the Mesoamerica Project for the fourth time on 1 July 2023.

24. The Mesoamerica Project was officially established by the presidents and heads of state and government at the Tenth Tuxtla Dialogue and Agreement Mechanism Summit (2008), focusing on two axes: economic and social. The latter addresses public health, risk management, food safety, and housing issues, among others. The Tuxtla Gutierrez Summit, originally scheduled for 2022, has yet to be rescheduled. On 26 June 2023, the

Mesoamerica Project and SICA signed a Memorandum of Understanding intended to enhance cooperation and complementarity between these two entities.

*Executive Commission of the Mesoamerica Project*

25. The Executive Commission of the Mesoamerica Project is composed of the presidential commissioners and the commissioner designated by the Prime Minister of Belize. Its primary functions are to ensure that the objectives of the Mesoamerica Project are met, to submit proposals to the governments, and to monitor Mesoamerica Project activities; it is also the political and administrative arm of the Executive Directorate. The current Executive Commission cycle ends in August 2023; the process of selecting the Executive Directorate is ongoing.

26. PAHO has participated in practically all the virtual meetings of the Mesoamerica Project and, in particular, in the meetings of the Mesoamerican Public Health System.

***Mesoamerican Public Health System***

27. The purpose of the Mesoamerican Public Health System is to respond to the main common challenges in public health and to strengthen national health systems through selected interventions and operational support provided by the Mesoamerican Institute of Public Health. In the field of health, priority has been given to work that advances the Regional Initiative for the Elimination of Malaria in the Central American region, road safety, risk communication, and the International Health Regulations, among others.

**South American integration entities**

***Andean Community: Andean Health Agency/Hipólito Unanue Agreement***

28. In the Andean Integration System, the Andean Health Agency/Hipólito Unanue Agreement (ORAS-CONHU) acts as executive secretariat for the Meeting of Ministers of Health of the Andean Area (REMSAA, Spanish acronym). PAHO participates in these meetings as the technical advisory agency on health. An umbrella memorandum of understanding was signed between PAHO and ORAS-CONHU on 16 March 2017 and then extended in 2019 until March 2023. Steps are being taken towards the signing of a new memorandum of understanding between PAHO and ORAS-CONHU. PAHO's Subregional Program for South America is the Organization's main interlocutor with ORAS-CONHU and, through its technical cooperation, PAHO supports the development and implementation of the strategic plan for health integration. The PAHO Strategic Plan 2020–2025 is in complete accordance with the ORAS-CONHU strategic plan for health integration for 2018–2022.

29. The 40th meeting of REMSAA was held in person on 25 November 2022, with the Minister of Health of Ecuador handing over the pro tempore presidency to Peru. At the meeting, several resolutions were adopted, including:

- a) Resolution REMSAA XL/553, approving the Andean Policy for the Prevention and Control of Cancer and creating the respective Andean Committee for Cancer Prevention and Control.
- b) Resolution REMSAA XL/554, approving the Andean Policy for the Reduction of Health Inequalities 2023–2030, which was proposed by the Andean Roundtable for Agreements against Health Inequalities.
- c) Resolution REMSAA XL/555, updating the Andean Policy on Sexual and Reproductive Health for Adolescents, with emphasis on pregnancy prevention.
- d) Resolution REMSAA XL/556, instructing the Andean Committee on Human Resources to update the Andean Policy on Human Resources in Health as well as the 2023–2030 Action Plan.
- e) Resolution REMSAA XL/557, adopting the WHO recommendations for the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of tuberculosis within the framework of the End TB Strategy.
- f) Resolution REMSAA XL/559, forming the Andean Committee on Renal Health in order to develop a work plan.
- g) Resolution REMSAA XL/560, urging the strengthening of the quality management system of the national public health and epidemiological surveillance laboratories in the Andean countries.
- h) Resolution REMSAA XL/564, re-electing Dr. María del Carmen Calle Dávila as executive secretary of ORAS-CONHU until 2025.

***Southern Common Market: Meeting of Health Ministers of MERCOSUR and Working Subgroup 11 on Health***

30. The highest sectoral body in this area of cooperation is the Meeting of Health Ministers of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay). The rest of the South American countries are Associate States. The working subgroups are technical bodies made up of representatives of the States Parties of MERCOSUR. Their main objective is the formulation and harmonization of common regulations in MERCOSUR within each area of jurisdiction. The main purpose of Working Subgroup 11 on Health (SGT 11) is to harmonize strategic policies linked with public health and align them with regional priorities, and to develop plans and programs of action for joint implementation.

31. An umbrella memorandum of understanding was signed between PAHO and MERCOSUR on 11 June 2015; it was renewed in 2019 until June 2023, and is currently being extended. New issues were included for which PAHO pledged to provide technical cooperation. The PAHO Strategic Plan 2020–2025 is entirely coherent with the thematic areas defined in the memorandum of understanding.

32. At the 52nd Meeting of Ministers of Health of MERCOSUR, which took place on 23 June 2023 in Argentina, the pro tempore presidency was carried over from Argentina to Brazil; the subregion's epidemiological status in relation to dengue, chikungunya, Zika virus, COVID-19, influenza, and respiratory syncytial virus was presented; and the following agreements and declarations were approved:

- a) Declaration of the Health Ministers of MERCOSUR and the State of Chile on the approval of the MERCOSUR Strategy on Climate Change and Health.
- b) Declaration of the Health Ministers of MERCOSUR and the State of Chile on the new international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response currently under discussion at WHO.

### ***Forum for the Progress and Integration of South America***

33. The Forum for the Progress and Integration of South America (PROSUR) is a mechanism and space for dialogue and cooperation among all South American countries to move toward more effective integration and promote the growth, progress, and development of South American countries. Its highest sectoral body is the Meeting of Health Ministers of PROSUR. Currently, eight South American countries have signed the charter of the forum: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, and Peru. On 27 January 2022, the PROSUR Presidential Summit was held in Cartagena de Indias (Colombia) and, on 21 July of that same year, the 7th PROSUR Meeting of Heads of State and Government and High Authorities was held in Luque (Paraguay).

34. During the pro tempore presidency of Paraguay, the seminar on investment in sustainable vaccine production was held within the framework of PROSUR's project for scaling immunization capacity, with the objective of analyzing the status of regional vaccine production and the role of States to sustainably increase production. The event was organized by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the Presidential Agency for International Cooperation, and the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Tourism of Colombia, together with the pro tempore presidency of Paraguay and with the support of the Inter-American Development Bank and PAHO/WHO. It was attended by technical officials from several countries, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Peru.

### **Action by the Directing Council**

35. The Directing Council is invited to take note of this report and provide any comments it deems pertinent.

---