

**17th SESSION OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE
ON PROGRAM, BUDGET, AND ADMINISTRATION
OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

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**AMENDMENTS TO THE STATUTE OF THE LATIN AMERICAN
AND CARIBBEAN CENTER ON HEALTH SCIENCES INFORMATION (BIREME)**

Introduction

1. The purpose of this document is to present to the Executive Committee, through its Subcommittee on Program, Budget, and Administration, a proposed modification to the Statute of the Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information (BIREME or the Center).
2. BIREME is the specialized center of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) for technical cooperation on health sciences information and communication in the Region of the Americas. Established in São Paulo, Brazil, in 1967, BIREME promotes the development of national and regional capacity and infrastructure for the management, organization, indexing, preservation, and dissemination of, and access to, scientific information, knowledge, and evidence, keeping abreast of international state-of-the-art methodologies and technology. PAHO technical cooperation through BIREME has made a significant contribution to the democratization of quality information in health, which is essential to health development and social inclusion in the Region.

Background

3. From its inception in 1967, BIREME operated under the legal framework of a Maintenance Agreement subscribed by PAHO and the Government of Brazil, through the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the State Secretariat of Health of São Paulo, and the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP), whose campus housed BIREME's physical headquarters.
4. In 2009, recognizing that BIREME's institutional framework did not adequately meet the Center's governance, management, and financing needs, the 49th Directing Council, through Resolution CD49.R5,¹ adopted a Statute for the Center. It established different categories of membership and a new structure, consisting of three bodies:

¹ Available at: <https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/406>.

- a) The BIREME Advisory Committee, comprising PAHO and the Government of Brazil as permanent members, plus five representatives of the Members of BIREME (i.e., five PAHO Member States selected on a rotating basis by the Directing Council of PAHO)
- b) The BIREME Scientific Committee, made up of scientific information specialists selected by the BIREME Advisory Committee
- c) The Secretariat of BIREME, whose function is the technical execution of BIREME's work program under the direction of an international Director appointed by and responsible to the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (PASB or the Bureau)

5. In addition to establishing a new Statute for BIREME, Resolution CD49.R5 also requested the Director of PASB to:

- (a) undertake negotiations with the Government of Brazil in order to conclude a new Headquarters Agreement for BIREME that defines the responsibilities of the Government with regard to the maintenance of BIREME, as well as its privileges and immunities in that country;
- (b) undertake negotiations with the Government of Brazil, through the appropriate Ministries and the Federal University of São Paulo, in order to conclude a new Facilities Agreement for BIREME's continued operation within the campus of the University, to include issues related to BIREME's physical premises, personnel, journal collection, and other support for the Center.

6. From 2009 to 2015, when the BIREME Maintenance Agreement expired,² the Bureau sought to conclude negotiations with the Government of Brazil for the BIREME Headquarters Agreement. However, as negotiations did not progress, in 2017 PAHO and the Government of Brazil entered into a specific five-year cooperation agreement (*Termo de Cooperação n° 93 – Desenvolvimento e aprimoramento da BIREME*) in order to guarantee the continued operations and financial stability of BIREME. This Agreement was renewed in 2022 and will expire on 2 February 2027.

7. In 2015, after almost 40 years of BIREME's residence at UNIFESP premises, the University notified PAHO that BIREME could no longer maintain its headquarters on the UNIFESP campus. As a result, in 2016 the Bureau relocated BIREME's facilities to rental premises in the city of São Paulo.

8. In light of the changing circumstances since 2009, the Statute of BIREME needs to be modified to account for the fact that the Center is no longer physically housed on the UNIFESP campus and to grant the Bureau the flexibility to relocate the Center's facilities, as necessary.

² The first agreement was signed on 3 March 1967 and the last one on 2 December 2004. The 2004 Maintenance Agreement expired on 1 March 2015.

9. The Director of PASB will continue to pursue the prompt signature of the new BIREME Headquarters Agreement between PAHO and the Government of Brazil to define the commitments and responsibilities of both parties, as well as BIREME's privileges and immunities in Brazil.

Proposed Modifications to the Statute of BIREME

10. Proposed modifications to the Statute of BIREME are shown below. These modifications, as well as other actions presented herein, have been developed in consultation with the Government of Brazil, taking into consideration the feedback received by PASB from the BIREME Advisory Committee and from PAHO Member States through PAHO Governing Bodies.

Article I Legal Status

The Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information, also known by its original name the Regional Library of Medicine ("BIREME"), is a specialized center of the Pan American Health Organization ("PAHO"), Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization ("WHO"), established pursuant to the resolutions of the Directing Council of PAHO and operating continuously in Brazil ~~since its creation, with headquarters in the city of São Paulo, since its creation, effected through an agreement signed between PAHO and the Government of the Federative Republic of Brazil.~~

Article XI Facilities

~~The arrangements regarding the physical facilities and other services provided to BIREME, headquartered since its creation on the UNIFESP campus in the city of São Paulo, Brazil, should be reflected in an agreement involving PAHO, the Government of Brazil, and UNIFESP.~~

Action by the Subcommittee on Program, Budget, and Administration

11. The Subcommittee is invited to take note of this document and provide any comments it deems pertinent to the Executive Committee.

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