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### COOPERATION FOR HEALTH DEVELOPMENT IN THE AMERICAS: PROGRESS REPORT

#### Background

1. The purpose of this document is to inform the Governing Bodies of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) about progress made in the implementation of Document CD52/11 (1) and Resolution CD52.R15 (2) on Cooperation for Health Development in the Americas.
2. Resolution CD52. R15 (2) requested that the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (PASB or the Bureau) present to the Directing Council or the Pan American Sanitary Conference periodic evaluations of the implementation and impact of the policy on cooperation for health development in the Region of the Americas.
3. The 29th Pan American Sanitary Conference of PAHO took note of the progress report on Cooperation for Health Development in the Americas (Document CSP29/INF/7[K]) (3) and agreed that “In order to keep the Governing Bodies of PAHO informed about compliance with the mandates of Resolution CD52.R15, progress reports will be submitted every two years.” Subsequent progress reports were submitted to the 57th PAHO Directing Council (Document CD57/INF/10[D]) (4) and to the 59th PAHO Directing Council (Document CD59/INF/16[G]) (5). This document is the fourth progress report.

#### Analysis of Progress Achieved

4. In 2022, on the occasion of the United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation, the Secretary-General of the United Nations stressed that, “In this era of unprecedented challenge and upheaval, solutions lie in solidarity. South-South and triangular cooperation are critical for developing countries to mitigate and adapt to climate disruption, address the global health crisis, including COVID-19 recovery, and achieve all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.” (6)
  5. In 2021, given the impact of the pandemic and the need to improve response capacity for future health emergencies, PAHO’s Governing Bodies approved the Strategy for Building Resilient Health Systems and Post-COVID-19 Pandemic Recovery to Sustain
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and Protect Public Health Gains (Document CD59/11) (7), which proposes, in line with the policy on cooperation for health development, to promote cooperation between countries and foster the exchange of knowledge to strengthen health systems and increase their resilience. Resolution CD59.R12 (8) on the Strategy for Building Resilient Health Systems and Post-COVID-19 Pandemic Recovery to Sustain and Protect Public Health Gains urges PASB to “promote regional cooperation and dialogue in health and foster cooperation among countries and the sharing of knowledge and experiences.”

6. To report on implementation of the mandate set forth in Resolution CD52. R15 (2), this report has been structured according to the three main guidelines described in Document CD52/11 (1): *a*) convening and advocacy; *b*) brokering and knowledge-sharing; and *c*) building partnerships and mobilizing resources.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Convening and advocacy***

7. Member States have recognized the importance of continuing to promote cooperation among countries for health development. In addition, they have highlighted the contributions that this modality can bring to building more resilient health systems and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (7, 8, 9).

8. The Bureau advocates for health on the international agenda and supports the identification of opportunities for collaboration among countries to address health priorities. To this end, it has continued to participate in the Inter-Agency Group on South-South Cooperation, convened by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC). PASB has promoted the exchange of information among the agencies in the United Nations system and has contributed to the development of guidelines for United Nations country teams on South-South and triangular cooperation.

9. In line with the United Nations System-Wide Strategy on South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development and the Action Plan (10) and with the PAHO Budget Policy (Resolution CD57.R3) (11), PASB has strengthened its subregional programs to enrich dialogue and share experiences in order to advance national and subregional health objectives.

10. Under the theme “Advancing South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable COVID-19 Recovery: Towards a Smart and Resilient Future,” the Global South-South Development Expo 2022, organized by UNOSSC together with the Government of Thailand and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, allowed for the sharing of cooperation experiences between countries, including those supported by PAHO, and that contribute to achieving the SDGs, especially SDG 3 and other health-related SDGs.

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<sup>1</sup> See paragraph 21 of Document CD52/11 (1).

11. Within the Expo, PAHO and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) organized a thematic forum on “Maximizing the role of South-South Cooperation in achieving Universal Health Coverage”, which showcased the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, syphilis, hepatitis, and Chagas disease. The Caribbean experience in building resilient health systems was presented, and the Ibero-American General Secretariat presented on its role in systematizing information on South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives in the health sector in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this forum, which brought together a large face-to-face and virtual audience, PASB also had a virtual booth to share information about its work on these issues. Also, in celebration of United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation, a document was published on best practices in South-South and triangular cooperation, which includes seven collaboration initiatives among countries of the Region of the Americas supported by PASB.

12. Recent reports by the UN Secretary-General described efforts by PAHO, in partnership with other UN agencies, to facilitate South-South cooperation initiatives in the context of COVID-19. The role PASB plays in promoting cooperation among countries to strengthen health systems and emergency preparedness and response capacities was also noted. In addition, efforts to mainstream South-South and triangular cooperation into work programs were highlighted (12, 13, 14).

13. In order to continue strengthening institutionalization of the policy within the Organization, cooperation between countries has been mainstreamed as a cooperation modality in the guidelines to monitor and evaluate progress towards achievement of the objectives in the PAHO Strategic Plan 2020–2025 and the PAHO Program Budget 2022–2023. In addition, together with UNOSSC, PASB held an online webinar for all staff to explain how this modality can accelerate health development, with examples of collaboration to face challenges during the pandemic.

14. In her latest annual (2021) (15) and quinquennial (2022) (16) reports, the PASB Director highlighted cooperation among countries for health development as a key mechanism to strengthen the country-focused approach and promote country-led initiatives. Cooperation between countries was also presented as a technical cooperation modality that contributes to improving equity and the implementation of cross-cutting themes, such as human rights and ethnicity.

### ***Brokering and knowledge-sharing***

15. *WHO presence in countries, territories and areas: 2021 report* (17), prepared by WHO with input from all Regions, indicated that the Region of the Americas is, after South-East Asia, the WHO region with the highest proportion of country offices supporting South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives (70%), most of which focus on advancing universal access to health and universal health coverage.

16. The Bureau has continued to rely on its brokering and has helped connect supply with demand. Through the grant/loan platform, PAHO's Regional Revolving Fund for Strategic Public Health Supplies facilitated South-South cooperation in more than 12 collaborations involving multiple countries and processed more than 100 grant/loan requests in the Region to mitigate risks of product shortages and expiration, especially in the areas of HIV, tuberculosis, and cancer, as well as other essential medicines, such as antidotes and sera.

17. The countries of the Region recognize PASB's work in promoting exchanges and brokerage. For example, cooperation between CARICOM and Argentina, aimed at strengthening national and regional capacities for the detection and surveillance of antimicrobial resistance in CARICOM Member States, was highlighted on several occasions and events as a cooperation modality that helped improve the capacity to respond to antimicrobial resistance. The project, recognized as a good practice, was documented in a recent UNOSSC publication (18).

18. The Bureau has monitored and collected information on cooperation initiatives between countries supported by the Organization. Analysis of all PAHO biennial work plans prepared in 2021 for the 2022–2023 biennium shows a total of 126 products and services<sup>2</sup> related to South-South and triangular cooperation, knowledge or experience sharing, and best practices or lessons learned. In most cases, the reported cooperation modalities refer to knowledge sharing and technical exchanges between countries in order to advance health objectives and to establish alliances, partnerships, or networks and training between countries. To a lesser extent, other reported cooperation modalities include technology transfer and joint research.

19. In recent years, PASB has also promoted and supported knowledge sharing among regions. In partnership with the Center for International Relations in Health of the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz), the Sergio Arouca National School of Public Health, and the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), an advanced course on "Diplomacy in Health and Global Health" was offered. It was aimed at officials in the International Relations Offices of the ministries of health, subregional integration mechanisms, and the foreign ministries of Latin American countries, as well as African member countries of the CPLP. This course created a space for dialogue and sharing experiences from day-to-day work. It also fostered mutual learning among participants around approaches to global health issues.

20. In 2021 and 2022, a series of dialogues organized by PAHO and ReAct Latin America brought together representatives of governments, communities, civil society, and academia, among others, to promote the exchange of ideas and experiences on the role of the community in the national response to antimicrobial resistance. Countries from the Region and 18 countries from other Regions participated. They presented experiences and committed to continue strengthening dialogue and sharing practices to address this public

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<sup>2</sup> For information on the definition of products and services, see PAHO's Strategic Plan 2020-2025 (*Official Document 359*).

health problem through the “One Health” approach (18). UNOSSC documented this experience as a good practice. PASB’s role in promoting this sharing of experience and knowledge among countries of the Region and with countries of other Regions was reported in various publications.

21. Health is crucial to achieving sustainable development. In this regard, the publication *Good Practices in South-South and Triangular Cooperation: Delivering on the Sustainable Development Goal on Good Health and Well-being (19)*, jointly produced by UNOSSC, PAHO/WHO, UNICEF, and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), presents some 40 good practices in South-South and triangular cooperation, of which eight were initiatives supported by PASB.

22. As with previous editions, *Good Practices in South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development—Volume 4 (18)*, prepared by UNOSSC with contributions from partners, includes seven good-practice experiences that PASB has supported and which help promote achievement of SDG 3 and other health-related SDGs. The publication *Spotlighting: Cities and other subnational COVID-19 responses for South-South and triangular cooperation (20)*, developed by UNOSSC and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), with the collaboration of PAHO, includes 10 experiences in responding to the pandemic at the subnational and local levels, of which three are from the Region.

23. PAHO is part of the South-South Galaxy global platform, which was developed by UNOSSC in collaboration with multiple actors in the field of development cooperation. This platform promotes knowledge sharing and alliance-building among partners globally and facilitates joint learning and collaboration towards achieving the SDGs. It also facilitates access to financing mechanisms and different subject-matter experts. On this platform, PASB regularly documents the experiences in South-South and triangular cooperation supported in the Region, and, if necessary, PASB experts are available to advise in the area of public health.

### ***Building partnerships and mobilizing resources***

24. The Bureau has continued to mobilize internal and external resources to support inter-country cooperation despite the financial challenges faced. It has also allocated financial resources of its own, which will be implemented during 2023, to support this cooperation.

25. “Extending access and coverage in maternal and child health to dispersed rural areas, indigenous communities, and border areas of the Paraguayan Chaco 2022–2024” is a collaborative project between the Ministry of Health of Paraguay and PAHO, with the support of the Office of the Resident Coordinator. It seeks to help improve and extend coverage and access to maternal and child health care in indigenous communities and border areas of the Paraguayan Chaco. The India-UN Development Partnership Fund

approved US\$ 1.5 million in funding for this project.<sup>3</sup> In addition, this fund is financing an initiative between Rwanda and Trinidad and Tobago (\$1 million) which, based on the experiences and lessons learned by Rwanda, aims to improve access to health services in Trinidad and Tobago by adopting new technologies, particularly robotics.

26. In 2022, the 2nd International Meeting of Community Health Agents of the Amazon was held in Madre de Dios, Peru, with the collaboration of PAHO and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). Community agents shared their experiences and knowledge around health care and promotion with an emphasis on addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. The Meeting was attended by 115 participants, including 33 community agents from Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru; the rest were government and civil society actors. The meeting concluded with a roadmap for future actions. Thanks to this, PAHO obtained the support of GIZ to continue this cross-border collaborative work on the health of indigenous peoples living in Andean-Amazonian border communities to improve vaccination coverage and community disease surveillance.

27. PAHO, together with WHO, UNOSSC and UNDRR, has organized the third edition of a joint training on “Transition to complex risk management and resilient urban futures: harnessing South-South cooperation and learning from COVID-19.” In this virtual edition, 1,300 people from more than 140 countries participated. The course is currently available on OpenWHO, with over 2,100 people enrolled.

28. Collaboration with subregional integration bodies has also been strengthened. For example, to address chronic kidney disease of non-traditional origin (CKDnt) in Central America, the Subregional Program for Central America supported the Technical Commission on Chronic Diseases and Cancer (CTCC) of the Council of Ministers of Health of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMISCA), with guidance from the Executive Secretariat of COMISCA (SE-COMISCA), in the exchange of evidence-based information, good practices, and challenges. This led to the development of a Strategy for Chronic Kidney Disease of Non-Traditional Origin in Central America and the Dominican Republic, which was approved by COMISCA. PASB is also collaborating with the Andean Health Agency/Hipólito Unanue Agreement (ORAS-CONHU) on an Andean project to move towards elimination of viral hepatitis as a public health problem in the Andean countries.

### **Lessons Learned**

29. The pandemic has shown that cooperation between countries and triangular cooperation have been instrumental as a cooperation modality to address health and development challenges. The Report of the End-of-biennium Assessment of the PAHO Program Budget 2020–2021/First Interim Report on the Implementation of the PAHO Strategic Plan 2020–2025 indicates that South-South cooperation and subregional initiatives continue to provide opportunities for “creating spaces to share experiences” on health issues. The report highlights the importance of continuing to promote this kind of collaboration (21).

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<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all monetary figures in this document are expressed in United States dollars.

30. The relevance of this cooperation modality has been recognized in global and regional forums and at the national and local levels, in which solutions and best practices are shared to advance recovery and build more resilient systems. Likewise, cooperation between countries offers a flexible modality for continued progress in addressing health inequities between and within countries.

31. It is important to promote this cooperation modality and identify and document good health practices that can be replicated in other national contexts to adapt the response to new post-pandemic health challenges. Also noteworthy is the enormous advantage posed by creating synergies between cooperation agencies of all kinds to optimize resources and results.

### **Action Needed to Improve the Situation**

32. The following actions are presented for consideration by the Member States:

- a) The Bureau will continue to strengthen partnerships with the United Nations system, regional integration mechanisms, and other partners to advocate for cooperation among countries as a mechanism to advance health development in the Region. It will also continue to contribute to implementation of the UN System-wide Strategy on South-south and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development and the associated action plan.
- b) The Bureau will seek to boost integration of this cooperation modality within its internal resource mobilization, monitoring, and evaluation processes to increase the impact of the policy.
- c) The Bureau will continue to support the documentation and dissemination of good practices in health cooperation among countries to make them available to the countries of the Region and other regions and help reduce gaps between countries in health issues. It will also continue to encourage Member States to promote and step up these exchanges to foment mutual learning.
- d) The Bureau will step up its efforts to promote cooperation with key countries (Belize, Bolivia, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Suriname), with an emphasis on leaving no one behind, and to promote cooperation between regions.
- e) The Bureau will continue to collaborate with the offices of International Relations Offices of the ministries of health in the exchange of capacities and experiences in priority issues on the global health agenda.
- f) The Bureau will continue to contribute to strengthening capacities internally, as well as in the countries of the Region, to promote the various modalities of South-South cooperation aimed at supporting Member States and sharing the lessons learned from the pandemic in order to promote resilient health systems to advance universal health.

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

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

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