

PAHO



News release

New PAHO Director: Ending the COVID-19 pandemic and building resilient health key priorities



Washington, DC, 31 January 2023 (PAHO) – Dr. [Jarbas Barbosa](#) was sworn in today as the new Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), pledging to work in partnership with member states to end the pandemic and ensure that the region’s health systems recover stronger than before. He will take office on 1 February 2023.

“Countries in the Americas face a complex epidemiological landscape, with the stubborn persistence of communicable diseases, the risk of outbreaks and epidemics, the rise of non-

communicable diseases, the damage caused by traffic accidents and violence, and the impacts of climate change,” Dr. Barbosa [said](#). “We need strong, resilient health systems that can perform all the Essential Public Health Functions adequately.”

Dr. Barbosa, formerly Assistant Director at PAHO, was sworn in at a ceremony held at the Organization of American States (OAS). PAHO is the specialized international health agency for the inter-American system and Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization (WHO). Dr. Barbosa, a national of Brazil, succeeds Dr. Carissa F. Etienne, of Dominica.

To address the “significant inequalities between and within countries” and to ensure post-pandemic recovery and preparedness, Dr. Barbosa’s tenure will focus on five strategic pillars:

- End the pandemic with the tools countries have at hand, including surveillance and vaccines
- Apply the lessons learned from the pandemic to prepare for future health emergencies
- Guarantee rapid and equitable access to health innovations for all countries in the region
- Build resilient national health systems based on Primary Health Care
- Strengthen PAHO’s capacity to help member states.

“I will work tirelessly,” Barbosa said, “to ensure that PAHO maintains all of its many achievements to date, renewing itself every step of the way, always building networks and working as a bridge for understanding, solidarity and innovation.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of universal health to both the public and heads of state like never before, Barbosa said.

“It is urgent that we make use of this attention to strengthen health systems, address persistent issues and shortcomings, and ensure the right to health of all peoples in our Region,” he added.

“One hundred and twenty years ago, our countries proposed an alliance to improve the health of our peoples and face outbreaks and epidemics together,” Dr. Barbosa said.

“The dream of pan-Americanism. The dream that solidarity among the countries of the Americas is a powerful force that can improve the lives of our peoples.”

“We stand here today, 120 years later, encouraged by these very dreams, which remain very much alive and continue to inspire us.”

QUOTES:

Carissa F. Etienne, outgoing Director of PAHO

“As I hand over this office and hand the steering wheel over to my esteemed friend and

colleague, Jarbas, I am confident that the future of the organization will be in good hands as you will bring to your new role exceptional technical expertise, astute policy making skills, together with pragmatism and wisdom from your many years of experience gained in your home country of Brazil as well as internationally.”

Nisia Trindade Lima, Minister of Health of Brazil

[Dr. Barbosa] is a thinker as well as a builder, somebody who transforms ideas into lasting intuitional practices. Throughout his extensive career, he has worn many hats at different levels within the single health system. As a public health expert, he always fought to defend the principles of a Brazilian health reform and work towards an inclusive and solidary society that places health as a universal right.”

Xavier Becerra, Secretary of Health and Human Services of the United States

“Created by necessity, hardened by crisis, and maintained by brotherhood, for more than 100 years, PAHO has been tested and has risen to meet every challenge in its path.”
“Dr. Barbosa, you have the great task of leading this organization at a particularly challenging time. We must put into practice all that we have learned from COVID-19, while also recognizing the next health emergency could be lurking in the shadows ready to emerge at any time.”

Molwyn Joseph, Minister of Health, Wellness and the Environment of Antigua and Barbuda

“Today, Dr. Jarbas, you commence the task of continuing the good work of the long line of leaders who have assisted the countries of the Americas over the last 120 years. You now have the opportunity to carve your own path and destiny as you steer us in a post pandemic era with its many ongoing challenges. I have no doubt that your experience, technical knowledge and passion for what public health can offer will allow you to attain your goal to build a better, more equitable world with universal health.”

Luis Almagro, Secretary General of the OAS

“You are assuming the leadership of PAHO at a critical juncture for the hemisphere, the moment in which the lessons learned from COVID-19 in the region, and in the world, must be applied so that in the future we can face similar situations in the best possible way.”

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director of the World Health Organization (WHO)

“You begin your work as regional director at a difficult time – with rising inflation and debt, squeezed budgets, and divisive politics and war. But also, you begin at an important time, as the world emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, and we seek to jump start progress towards the triple billion targets and the sustainable development goals.”

Carlyle de Macedo, Director Emeritus of PAHO

“Dr. Jarbas Barbosa has all the qualities to be an excellent director and fulfill his mission with great efficacy. His technical capacity demonstrated, through his diverse and successful professional experience, all the qualities and attributes of a leader.”

Sir George Alleyne, Director Emeritus of PAHO

“To be Director of the Pan American Health Organization is an almost sacred trust, but I am absolutely sure that you will discharge that trust with honor to yourself and with benefit to the health of the peoples of the Americas.”

Mirta Roses, Director Emeritus of PAHO

“Since the beginning of his career, [Dr. Jarbas Barbosa] has demonstrated an open and reflective attitude, willing to listen, to conciliate and to implement decisions. He has the capacity and experience in political and institutional management, and extensive knowledge of PAHO and WHO, international cooperation and partners and allies, as well as the countries of the region, communities and civil society organizations.”

Links

[Dr. Jarbas Barbosa - Biography](#)

[Dr. Jarbas Barbosa – Inaugural address](#)

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The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) works with the countries of the Americas to improve the health and quality of life of its population. Founded in 1902, it is the world’s oldest international public health agency. It serves as the Regional Office of WHO for the Americas and is the specialized health agency of the Inter-American system.