



PAHO calls for more concerted action to prevent animal to human diseases, announces agreements to increase access to COVID-19 vaccines

In the weekly update on the COVID-19 situation in the Americas, PAHO Director urged countries to prepare for the next pandemic by addressing health threats arising from the connection between humans, animals, and the environment.



Washington, D.C. October 6, 2021 (PAHO) – Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Director Carissa F. Etienne said today that COVID-19 infections have generally declined in the Americas in the past week, but “local trends

remain worrisome.” She called on countries to expedite vaccination efforts and take steps to strengthen surveillance efforts to monitor diseases that spread from humans to animals, such as coronaviruses.

The Director also announced that PAHO has closed additional agreements with AstraZeneca, Sinopharm, and Sinovac to facilitate access to COVID-19 vaccines in Latin America and the Caribbean. The WHO Emergency Use Listing authorized vaccines will be made available to countries this year and in 2022.

Turning to the risk presented by animal to human – or zoonotic – diseases, Dr. Etienne called for regional governments to apply a “One Health” approach to rapidly detect emerging pathogens that have the potential to pose a public health risk. PAHO has prioritized this approach for many years.

“Just as we work together to control this pandemic, we must consider the ways in which we can collaborate to avoid future pandemics,” she said.

“COVID-19 has been unique in its scale and impact, but it’s not the first emerging disease to cause ripple effects throughout the world,” she added, citing recent epidemics with severe impacts that were caused by diseases that spill from animals to people, such as Ebola, chikungunya, yellow fever, avian influenza, and Zika.

“We need countries to ensure that animal, agricultural and environmental partners are brought to the table to build more robust surveillance systems that can detect risks faster, prioritize investments in R&D for high-risk pathogens, and establish strong pandemic responses that build on the strengths of these diverse areas of expertise,” she said.

“ As countries revisit their health budgets, rethink how they deliver health care, and engage in global efforts to prevent the next pandemic, we urge them to build on this “One Health” approach as the smartest, most effective way to protect ourselves from the next crisis,” she said.

Addressing the trajectory of COVID-19 in the Americas this week, Dr. Etienne noted that cases have decreased in the U.S. and Canada but increased in Mexico.

While cases are declining across the Caribbean, Cuba, and Bermuda continue to report high rates of new infections and Barbados saw cases increase by nearly 75% over the last week.

Although cases are generally decreasing in Central America, Costa Rica continues to see high rates of hospitalization and ICU bed use. Hospitalizations have also jumped by two-thirds in Belize.

In South America, cases are dropping in many countries but rising in Chile, where the increase is driven primarily by outbreaks in urban centers.

Over the last week, nearly 1.2 million COVID-19 cases and 24,000 COVID-related deaths were reported in the Americas.

Links

PAHO [Director's Remarks](#)

[Conferencia de prensa de la OPS sobre COVID-19 / PAHO's Press Briefing on COVID-19 - ORIGINAL AUDIO](#)

[Coletiva de Imprensa OPAS - COVID-19 - PORTUGUÊS](#)

[PAHO Press Briefing on COVID19 - ENGLISH](#)

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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.