



News release

PAHO brings together health authorities in the Americas to discuss future pandemic international instrument



Washington, DC, March 14, 2023 (PAHO)- A [preliminary draft](#) for a new convention, agreement, or other international health instrument to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness and response was the focus of a regional meeting facilitated by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) today in Washington, DC.

During the meeting, representatives from health ministries and foreign affairs in the Americas were briefed on the latest deliberations of the [Intergovernmental Negotiating Body \(INB\)](#) – a process initiated to draft and negotiate a new instrument to be submitted for approval by World Health Organization (WHO) Member States in 2024.

In his opening remarks at the meeting, PAHO Director and WHO Regional Director for the Americas Jarbas Barbosa said the new agreement presents “an opportunity to leave the world and next generations better prepared” to face future pandemics.

"COVID-19 showed us that no one was well prepared to respond to a public health emergency such as this pandemic," the PAHO Director said, stressing that "the lessons from the pandemic should be reflected in the new instrument".

Among these, he cited the importance of transparent, objective, real-time and evidence-based communication, and equity in access to health technologies, such as personal protective equipment, medicines, and vaccines. "Equitable access to the means of controlling transmission and saving lives is an ethical, moral and health imperative," he said.

At an extraordinary meeting of the World Health Assembly in December 2021, WHO Member States agreed to launch this process to create a new instrument, underlining a common collaborative commitment to prevent outbreaks that could have an impact such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Crises are a good time to make changes," the PAHO Director said. "Reviewing our current mechanisms is everyone's responsibility, and the new instrument can serve to advance the capacities of countries to respond to a health emergency," he added.

Dr. Ciro Ugarte, PAHO's Director for Health Emergencies, said the meeting initiated by PAHO is “extremely important” to promote understanding about the future instrument, enabling Member States to “actively participate in the negotiations and dialogue, and on decisions that will be important for all countries and every person on the planet.”

"We are emerging from the pandemic, but there are still challenges," Dr. Ugarte said, asking countries to "take advantage of the opportunity" presented by the new instrument to reach agreements that could allow them to better prevent and respond to a health crisis.

The new accord could complement other initiatives, actions and measures aimed at making

the world safer from pandemics, particularly the 2005 International Health Regulations (IHR).

Dr. Barbosa invited country representatives to seek regional consensus on the new instrument ahead of the fifth round of INB deliberations, set to take place on 3-6 April in Geneva.

Links

[Preliminary draft agreement](#)

[Q & A: Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response Accord](#)

[Intergovernmental Negotiating Body](#)

MEDIA CONTACTS

Luciana Viegas: + 1 202 981-8455

Ashley Baldwin: + 1 202 340-4025

Sebastian Oliel: +1 202 316-5679

mediateam@paho.org

www.paho.org

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.