



PAHO celebrates 120 years promoting health in the Americas



Washington D.C. 1 December 2022 (PAHO) – Tomorrow, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) marks its Anniversary as the world’s oldest international public health agency, celebrating 12 decades of work promoting health and wellbeing throughout the region of the Americas.

On this day in 1902, 11 countries came together at the First General International Sanitary Convention of the American Republics and founded the International Sanitary Bureau. Their aim was to address the spread of yellow fever across borders during a time of rapid maritime transport

expansion.

Since then, PAHO has worked tirelessly to combat disease, prolong life and to promote the physical and mental health of all people in the Americas, leaving no one behind.

“As our region begins to emerge from almost three years of COVID-19 pandemic, one which has laid bare some of our most striking health inequalities, never before I have been more convinced that the creation of PAHO 120 years ago was an act of incredible foresight,” PAHO Director, Carissa F. Etienne said.

“Today, the organization continues to work with countries under the guiding principle that health is not a privilege but a fundamental human right,” she added.

Throughout the past 120 years, PAHO has led the Americas in becoming the first region in the world to eliminate smallpox and poliomyelitis, and to eliminate the transmission of rubella and neonatal tetanus.

The organization has also played a key role in achieving a 30-year increase in average life expectancy in the region, as well as a significant reduction in child mortality and an expansion of health coverage among poor and vulnerable populations.

Over the past three years, PAHO has worked on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response in the region, supporting countries, equipping laboratories and providing tests. Through its Revolving Fund, PAHO procured and delivered over 151 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to more than 30 countries of the Americas.

PAHO is the specialized health agency of the Inter-American System and also serves as Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization (WHO). PAHO has 35 Member States and four Associate Members in the region. Under their leadership, PAHO sets regional health priorities and mobilizes action to address health problems throughout the Americas.

Join the celebrations:

[PAHO 120th Anniversary video](#)

[Photos and videos](#)

Web page: <https://www.paho.org/en/120>

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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.