JOINT SUMMIT WORKING GROUP OEA/Ser.E

Meeting of High Authorities GTCC/doc.78/20

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**FINAL REPORT**

Third Meeting of High Authorities of the Joint Summit Working Group
on the Impact of COVID-19 in the Americas

1. **Welcoming remarks by the Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS) and Chair of the Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG)[[1]](#endnote-1)**

The Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), Mr. Luis Almagro, welcomed the Third Meeting of High Authorities of the Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG). The JSWG was convened as of April 2020 to address in a coordinated fashion the health and socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on members states in the region. The Secretary General thanked Dr. Carisa Etienne, Director of the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), for the guidance and leadership at the head of her organization in addressing the humanitarian crisis and its impact on the health sector regionally, underscoring the value of the multilateral coordination and technical solutions being implemented.

The Third Meeting responded to a request made by Mr. Manuel Otero, Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), in relation to food security and intraregional trade, in light of their importance in member states’ socio-economic recovery strategies in the context of the pandemic.

The Secretary General gave the floor to Ambassador José Manuel Boza, Permanent Representative of Peru to the OAS, Chair of the Summits of the Americas Process.

1. **Remarks by the Chair of the Summits of the Americas Process**

Ambassador José Boza greeted participants and thanked the Secretary General of the OAS for convening the meeting.

On behalf of the Chair of the Summits of the Americas Process, he expressed thanks for the opportunity to participate in the High-Level JSWG meetings. He stated that during the next meeting of the Summits Implementation Review Group (SIRG), participating states would be informed about said meetings.

Ambassador Boza underscored the efforts of organizations like the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) to offer recommendations and cooperation to address the impact of the epidemic on food systems. At the same time, he mentioned different measures adopted by the Peruvian government to avert a food crisis, especially for the most vulnerable segments of the population. The Ambassador emphasized Peru’s role in support of multilateralism, through the Ministerial Declaration on COVID-19 or the multilateral trading system in the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in favor of global supply chains.

Ambassador Boza concluded by underscoring the challenge posed by the reopening of regional economies in a manner that optimizes economic, health, food, and development models and policies and promotes sustainable growth to achieve a healthy planet that is more equitable and resilient.

The remarks of the Chair of the Summits Process have been published in document: [GTCC/INF.38/20.](http://www.summit-americas.org/jswg/meetings/third_meeting_covid/PERU_SPN.doc)

1. **Update on the dimensions of the pandemic in the America by Dr. Carissa F. Etienne, Director of the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO)**

 Dr. Carisa Etienne, Director of PAHO, greeted authorities from the JSWG organizations and presented an update on the health situation in the region, highlighting the increase in transmission in countries in South and Central America. The information reported is as of June 11.

* 7.4 million cases were reported worldwide. 3.5 million cases and 192,000 deaths were reported in the Americas. Of these, 75,346 cases and 3,401 deaths were reported in the preceding 24 hours.
* Five out of the top 10 countries in the world reporting the highest number of new cases in the past 24 hours are in the Americas: Brazil, United States of America, Chile, Peru, and Mexico.
* The top three countries in the world reporting the highest number of new deaths in the past 24 hours are in the Americas: Brazil, United States of America, and Mexico.
* Countries reporting a significant percentage of increases in newly confirmed cases compared with the previous day are: Argentina (1,226 additional cases, a 5% increase), Brazil (32,913 additional cases, a 4% increase), Chile (5,596 additional cases, a 4% increase), Mexico (4,883 additional cases, a 4% increase), Colombia (1,604 additional cases, a 4% increase), Peru (5,087 additional cases, a 2% increase), and the United States of America (20,315 additional cases, a 1% increase).
* Significant increases in new cases were reported in Haiti, Honduras, French Guyana, Suriname, Guatemala, and Costa Rica.

Dr. Etienne reported that the pandemic is disproportionally affecting vulnerable segments of the population—i.e., poor in urban areas—particularly in megacities, indigenous people, people of African descent, and migrants. For these segments of the population, social distancing, stay-at-home orders, and public health measures such as quarantines, self-isolating, and hand-washing are difficult to implement. They are also more likely to suffer from chronic conditions like HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and non-communicable diseases like hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, asthma, and conditions that predispose you to COVID-19.

**Update by country**

**Bolivia**: (13,949 confirmed cases and 475 deaths)

* Santa Cruz, the largest department in Bolivia, is facing a marked increase in the number of cases, accounting for 65% of the country’s cases, followed by Beni, with 19% of the cases.
* The situation of Covid-19 in Beni, the second largest department in Bolivia, is critical. Beni is one of the poorest departments in the country, which has the lowest capacity of health services, the highest incidence rate (437 per 100,000 inhabitants) and the fastest increase in the epidemic curve. The situation is serious. Thirty percent of health workers have tested positive for COVID-19.
* Coordinating actions between the municipal, departmental, and national levels in Beni are challenging and it is expected that the situation may become a COVID-19 hotspot as serious as Guayaquil in Ecuador or Iquitos in Peru.
* The President of Bolivia, asked PAHO’s support to develop a new response plan for Beni, aligned with the National COVID-19 Response Strategy. A high-level assessment mission, consisting of 4 ministers and a PAHO representative, traveled to Beni.

**Haiti**: (3,538 confirmed cases and 54 deaths)

* A 6% increase in new cases was reported in the preceding 24 hours. Individuals with respiratory illnesses compatible with Covid-19 wait too long to seek care for several reasons: stigma, discrimination, financial barriers to access medical attention, and denial they have COVID-19.
* The governments of Haiti and the Dominican Republic are discussing joint efforts to address the matter.
* The government purchased and received an important shipment worth $18 million, containing beds, equipment, supplies, and personal protective equipment (PPE).
* There remains, however, a significant deficit in dedicated beds, materials for laboratory testing, and adequately trained staff. The projection for beds needed is 3,000 (according to PAHO) and 7,000 (according to the National Commission). Currently there are 501 beds available, 411 in the private sector. There is a dire lack of ICU beds (there are less than 50). Furthermore, there is a shortage of ambulances for patient transfers.
* It is possible that COVID-19 will spread in Haiti for a prolonged period of time through large swathes of the country.

**Nicaragua:** (1,309 confirmed cases and 46 deaths)

* Confirmed cases and deaths are reported once a week at a press conference.
* A sharp increase in the number of cases has officially been reported in Nicaragua; unofficial reports, however, have indicated that figures are significantly higher, as the main public and private hospitals in Managua, Matagalpa, and several other departments are operating at their full capacity for COVID-19 patients.
* Sudden deaths and rapid burials have been reported in several departments. Most deaths are attributed to atypical pneumonia, a new diagnosis used to refer to deaths consistent with COVID-19. Several high-level government officials have reportedly died from COVID-19.

Dr. Etienne noted that quarantine or social distancing is not being adequately implemented.

**Venezuela** (2,738 cases, 23 deaths).

* There has been a significant increase in the number of reported cases in Venezuela, especially in border states.
* An agreement was reached between the Venezuelan government and the National Assembly to collaborate on the use of resources to address the response. They agreed to expand the capacity of the health sector to test, deliver quality treatment and care, ensure provision of infection protection control, provision of public health measures, and prioritize the hardest hit areas.

**Health challenges**

* Insufficient supplies of PPE and essential commodities in many countries
* Inequity
* High dependence on the informal economy
* Overwhelmed health facilities in some countries
* Access to health services
* Decision-making to relax lockdowns and stay-at-home orders
* Protection of migrants and border issues
* Gaps in public perception of risks
* Continuity of priority health programs

**Ministerial meetings**

 Dr. Etienne reported that PAHO had organized three ministerial meetings for the Americas. Held on June 10, there was one meeting each for North America and the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. Countries shared and discussed their experiences in case detection and laboratory diagnosis (Barbados, Mexico, and Argentina), monitoring contacts and public health interventions (Jamaica, Cuba, and Colombia), and expansion of care services for critical COVID-19 patients (Guyana, El Salvador, and Chile).

 Dr. Etienne also stated that member states began to prepare for the response early. On January 14, the Director of PAHO activated the incident management system, alerted all focal points and wrote to countries requesting that they begin preparations for responding to the pandemic. Countries prepared response plans and activated multisectoral committees with the highest level of engagement of heads of state.

 Training for testing, for infection protection and risk management was conducted. Countries were provided with testing kits and laboratory supplies and guidance documents were provided, all with the support of PAHO technical cooperation.

 Very early countries implemented social distancing, lockdowns, stay-at-home orders and communicated public health messages on risk reduction. Many of them closed borders. Through these measures, most countries were able to contain the transmission or reduce it significantly, thus delaying the peak.

 The Director of PAHO also indicated that countries have generally taken measures to expand capacity for testing and medical care, as well as for contact tracing, quarantine, and isolation. Increased transmission occurred when the infection reached vulnerable populations.

 Dr. Etienne concluded her update on the actions taken by PAHO and critical cases in the region. Her remarks have been published in document [GTCC/INF.39/20.](http://www.summit-americas.org/jswg/meetings/third_meeting_covid/PAHO_ENG.doc)

1. **Impacts on food security, value chains, and intraregional trade**

The Secretary General of the OAS, Mr. Luis Almagro, underscored the need to address the impact of the health crisis on food systems and matters related to value chains and intraregional trade. To this end, he invited the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to share the actions it has taken in this regard.

**4.1.** **Intervention by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)**

The Director of IICA, Mr. Manuel Otero, thanked the Secretary General for the invitation to the meetings and noted that his remarks would focus on analyzing food security in Latin America and the Caribbean. He began by presenting the four main topics of his presentation: contrasts and vulnerabilities prior to COVID 19; the impact of the pandemic on food consumption; the response by Latin American and Caribbean countries; the pending agenda and the role of IICA.

He underscored that the Latin America region is the most important [*sic*] net exporter in the world, thus ensuring security worldwide. Despite the foregoing, there are contrasts and paradoxes. First, large exporters of basic foodstuffs coexist in the region alongside countries that are highly dependent on exports. Second, in food-producing regions there are, paradoxically, significant levels of poverty and food insecurity. Third, there is the contradiction that while the region has focused on reducing hunger and malnutrition, it also suffers from the scourge of obesity, which leads to chronic illnesses. Finally, there is the issue of family-based agriculture, which is the backbone of production of basic commodities that are the adjustment variable in times of crisis.

In keeping with the information presented, the Hemisphere has a positive trade balance of US$154 billion. One third of the countries are large exporters, and for every US$1 imported, US$8 in exports is generated. Nevertheless, in contrast, we have the case of countries like Antigua y Barbuda, where for every US$1 imported, US$0.03 in exports is generated. The question remains as to why intra-bloc trade is not emphasized to alleviate this situation.

Mr. Otero mentioned that the largest percentage of the poor and those who suffer from food insecurity live in rural areas. In rural areas, where 27-30% of the population resides, 1 out of every 5 inhabitants cannot feed themselves.

Furthermore, while some countries are fighting hunger and malnutrition, others like Uruguay, Costa Rica, or Barbados, have low levels of malnutrition. Meanwhile, Haiti is the country that is most vulnerable to food insecurity. There is also the extreme case of Venezuela, where, according to available statistics, we are talking about a rate of 80% of food insecurity.

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Mr. Otero pointed out that alongside this phenomenon is another concerning situation, which is the increase in obesity in countries like the Bahamas, Argentina, or Chile. This has triggered increases in the occurrence of non-communicable diseases.

Finally, he mentioned that small farmers, who number around 17 million, produce 60% of the region’s food production. [However,] they are the most vulnerable sector and face obstacles in accessing infrastructure, financing, technical resources, vocational education and social benefits. In Central America 60% of [farm] workers live in poverty.

To sum up the status of food security pre-COVID, IICA developed a Food Vulnerability Index, which is a calculation that takes into account five critical variables: per capita income, nutritional status per capita, extent of dependence on imports for food; resources available in fiscal accounts; and the balance of the current account. Based on this calculation, the most vulnerable countries to food insecurity are: Haiti, Bolivia, and Venezuela, and some Central American countries. The least vulnerable countries are the United States, Canada, and some Mercosur countries.

**Impact of the pandemic**

Mr. Otero analyzed the impacts of the pandemic in recent months. There has been a sharp decrease in agricultural activity associated with the downturn in economic activity; a decrease and variation in international trade; impairment of short and long chains, as well as serious problems in mobilizing goods and individuals in agri-business chains.

The foregoing has led to decreased revenue, especially for the poorest families, which has caused inequity, inflation of food prices, and raised the specter of scarcity. This situation is sparking the peculiar phenomenon of inverse migration. Since a large percentage of workers are linked to informal chains, they are returning to rural areas. A change in consumption to less healthy diets has been seen, which can give rise to higher rates of obesity and occurrence of non-communicable diseases.

According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the projected poverty rate in Latin America for 2020 is 5%, which is equivalent to 30 million poor people—a setback in comparison with the situation that existed previously. There has also been an uptick in inequality, with an increase of 5-6% in the GINI coefficient. The impact of the current pandemic is more serious than the financial crisis [was], and is not affecting everyone equally. Indeed, it has hit the countries of the Eastern Caribbean particularly hard given that they are vulnerable as regards food production and natural disasters.

According to statistics on growth presented by the World Bank, the Latin American and Caribbean region will see a scant economic growth of 2.8-3%, a situation that will likely get worse over time.

The resilient nature of agriculture makes it a sector that serves as a buffer and positions it as a strategic sector. Among exports of goods, which have decreased 8.6% from March 2019 to March 2020, exports of agricultural goods have increased 1.6%. Belize, Brazil, Costa Rica, and Mexico have increased [exports of] agricultural goods. Peru, however, has shown a significant drop, which is also the case in Argentina and Uruguay.

**Countries’ responses**

After recording and systematizing 220 regional policy instruments, IICA determined that governments’ responses to the situation have principally entailed: ensuring staple foods for vulnerable segments of the population, providing financial relief and facilities for greater liquidity to businesses and individuals by reducing interest rates, ensuring health and safety protocols for agricultural workers and marketing of agricultural products on markets, controlling scarcity and speculation on local markets, and promoting domestic production and supply of foodstuffs.

**Pending agenda**

Mr. Otero made an appeal for the recognition of agriculture’s pivotal role in reactivation strategies as a strategic sector for the Hemisphere’s future. For a future agenda he mentioned the following topics to be studied further:

1. The need to rethink the institutional framework for agriculture with greater emphasis on the social piece;
2. Reassessment of the technology agenda and an intensive use of the digital agenda;
3. Promotion of trade and regional integration without overregulating health protocols; ensuring free transit of individuals and trade at borders;
4. Ensuring functioning of regional and international chains;
5. Boosting short distribution circuits and domestic supply of foodstuffs from family-based agriculture.

**The role of IICA**

Mr. Otero emphasized the great complexity of the future, which would likely become more complicated considering the health and socio-economic situation. Countries would have to strengthen their ability to anticipate events and work together. IICA is a strategic partner with innovative solutions based on regional public goods.

Furthermore, IICA promotes good hygiene practices among farm workers. Additionally, it has implemented a real-time system to measure surpluses of agricultural products and has launched an agricultural extension services application for Caribbean countries.

The head of IICA made an appeal to jointly address the complex situation the region was facing.

IICA’s presentation has been published as document: [GTCC/INF.40/20](http://www.summit-americas.org/jswg/meetings/third_meeting_covid/IICA_SPN.doc).

* 1. **Intervention of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)**

Secretary General Almagro then gave the floor to Fabrizio Opertti, Manager of the Integration and Trade Sector of the IDB, to share the efforts his organization is undertaking on the matter of food security. Mr. Opertti expressed his gratitude for the invitation and underscored the need to strengthen multilateralism and alignment of interventions.

Mr. Otero indicated that his remarks were aimed at providing the IDB’s perspective on the role of international trade in ensuring food security in Latin America and the Caribbean. To this end, the IDB has focused its response on four fundamental aspects: health response, support to vulnerable groups, safeguarding the productive fabric(networks?), and support for fiscal policies.

The IDB has addressed the phenomenon in a holistic manner with the goal of supporting food security. To this end it has taken measures in four areas:

1. Incentivize inter-sectoral and inter-agency coordination to ensure complementarity of interventions related to food security;
2. Increase access to food for the most vulnerable segments of the population by generating revenue that leads to greater consumption;
3. Reduce the triple burden of malnutrition—undernourishment, nutrient deficiency, and obesity—and improve food safety; and
4. Ensure availability of foodstuffs by increasing agricultural production via greater productivity without putting pressure on natural resources, facilitating trade, and improving rural infrastructure. The IDB has made significant efforts to study the relationship between trade policy, disruption of supply chains, and food security, and is sharing its main conclusions.

First of all, this crisis differs in many ways from the 2007-2008 crisis in food prices for the following reasons:

* Inventories of grain are substantially greater and good harvests are expected for staple food crops, especially in the United States.
* Oil prices are at historic minimums. This is in contrast to the upward trend during the 2007-2008 crisis, which put pressure on food production, pushing up the price of fertilizers and incentivizing substitution with energy crops and speculation in the commodities markets.

As regards trade policy, more than 30 countries adopted export restrictions during the previous crisis, which affected 28% of global trade. Currently, only a dozen countries have taken protectionist measures, with an impact on approximately 6% of global trade.

Mr. Opertti added that the foregoing does not mean that the region is exempt from risks derived from the impact of the pandemic on agriculture and global food markets. Latin American and Caribbean countries that are net food importers are exposed to supply-side risks. Restrictions on exports and disruptions in production and logistical chains, as well as the increase in prices this will lead to, may decrease the availability of food.

On the other extreme of the spectrum, net exporters are mostly exposed to demand-side risks. The increase in costs and the reduction in demand that the economic recession triggers, may translate into less revenue from exports for countries and businesses and lower earnings for workers, and as a result, less capacity to access quality food.

Risks on the supply side are limited and concentrated in certain sectors or segments: On the supply side, the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic mitigates some risks and exposes the agricultural sector to others.

Confinement and social distancing measures will have a minimal impact on mechanized crop production such as wheat and soy, which are capital intensive and take place in rural areas. Furthermore, these crops are handled with minimal human contact and, although there are some disruptions, most ports are still operating. Additionally, in contrast to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Middle East Respiratory System (MERS), or avian flu, COVID-19 has not reached the livestock sector.

By comparison, due to the greater person-to-person transmission risk, the downstream segments of agrifood chains in urban areas are those that are most exposed to disruption due to social distancing measures. Food products with greater value added that are labor-intensive and perishable, such as beef and veal and milk products, are the most exposed. Similarly, some perishable goods, such as fruit, vegetables, seafood, and gourmet flowers, are being affected by the interruption in passenger flights, which are generally used to transport cargo.

Risks on the demand-side, in contrast, are high. The greatest threat to food security in the region probably comes from a demand shock.

It is expected that the recession that already began in China, the United States, and Europe—the three leading trading partners of Latin America and the Caribbean—will worsen and will reach levels that have not been seen in decades. In countries in which the net trade balance of food represents a significant portion of GDP, the downturn in demand and commodity prices will translate into revenue losses, substitution for lower quality goods when consuming food, and finally, in poverty and food insecurity. Mr. Opertti has underscored some examples of trade-related risks the region is facing:

**Haiti**: Net food imports represent 11.2% of GDP, close to a fourth of which corresponds to rice, a staple crop for low-income segments of the population. An increase in international prices accompanied by scarcity in global markets may put Haiti at risk for a food security crisis. Other Caribbean islands are in a similar, albeit less critical, situation.

**El Salvador**: Although El Salvador is less dependent on the food trade (3.3% of GDP), a significant part of its food imports come from the region, particularly the labor-intensive and perishable products, such as milk products and beef and veal. Therefore, possible disruptions in regional production, logistic and cold chains caused by COVID-19 represent a serious threat to food security. Other countries in Central American face a similar challenge.

**Paraguay and other countries that are net exporters of agricultural commodities**: At the other end of the spectrum, Paraguay is an example of a vulnerable economy from the revenue side, inasmuch as its net food exports represent 12.1% of GDP. For net exporters dependent on agricultural commodities, such as Nicaragua, Costa Rica, or Uruguay, the main risk is an overall decrease in demand. At the same time, exporters of time-sensitive products, such as Andean countries specialized in high-value-added products such as fruit, vegetables, flowers, and seafood, are particularly exposed to disruption in logistical chains.

To conclude, Mr. Opertti shared some public policy recommendations to address the threat, in particular, through the use of trade policy.

Measures to facilitate trade adopted by many countries in the region to maintain the movement of food supply chains provide an opportunity not only to mitigate the effects of the crisis in the short term, but also to lay the foundation for a more robust recovery in the future.

In particular, the following measures may have a significant impact on countries that are net food importers:

* Promote cooperation among customs and migration authorities to implement fast-track emergency procedures for clearance of goods, with a focus on food.
* Eliminate tariffs, at least temporarily, on critical goods for food security, such as staple food crops, feed, and fertilizers.
* Implement fast-track procedures for licenses and certifications related to sanitary and phytosanitary measures.
* Use non-intrusive control mechanisms to speed up clearance of goods, with special channels for perishable products or those that require cold chains.
* Work jointly with certified and reliable importers, such as authorized economic operators and companies that frequently trade in essential goods, to facilitate export and import procedures.

In sum, the IDB proposes a trade strategy based on technical progress, competitiveness, a business-friendly climate, market and product diversification, and quality improvement. This strategy not only makes a fundamental contribution to economic development in the region, but also to global food security.

* 1. **Intervention by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)**

The Director of OECD’s Global Relations, Mr. Andreas Schaal, thanked Secretary General Almagro for the invitation to the meeting, underscoring two points in particular. The first point is related to integration inasmuch as the OECD considers it to be a fundamental variable in regional value chains.

He indicated that the OECD would launch “*Health at a Glance in Latin America*” a publication on the health situation in Latin America, which could be presented to the JSWG.

Finally, the OECD Ministerial Social Inclusion Summit on Latin America, to which authorities from the region are invited, will take place from July 13-17.

For his part, Mr. Jesús Santos, Agricultural Specialist, mentioned that COVID-19 has had an impact on food chains by causing bottlenecks for some inputs, especially seasonal labor and difficulties in accessing means of transportation.

The greatest impacts are seen in reduced demand due to changes in consumption. Food chains, however, have been resilient in responding to this unprecedented situation and political leaders have lifted restriction on the agricultural sector.

The greatest risk to food security lies in the reduced access to food caused by revenue losses.

Mr. Santón stated that the OECD, together with other international organizations, monitored supply and demand of agrifood products through the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS). This has highlighted the soundness of worldwide supply of staple foods. Nevertheless, the risks to food security in the future are building on several fronts: the negative impact on revenues, local pests, jobs at risk in the food processing sector, and difficulty in accessing fertilizers.

The OECD’s monitoring of country-level policies reveals that the leading agricultural exporters have kept international trade open. They have exempted agricultural activities from confinement measures, adopted measures to facilitate trade flows, strengthened information systems in food chains, taken measures to increase availability of seasonal labor, and provided financial support for the agrifood sector.

To conclude, he affirmed that for the sake of ensuring food security it is essential that policies respond to three criteria: maintain markets open; ensure vulnerable people’s access to food; and use the situation to improve resilience and productivity in the food sector.

* 1. **Intervention by the World Bank**

The Secretary General of the OAS gave the floor to the Acting Vice-President for Latin America and the Caribbean of the World Bank, Mr. Luis Humberto López, who reiterated the magnitude of the crisis’ impact. He indicated that according to the Global Economic Prospects, expected growth in the region would be approximately minus 5.8%, the worst figure in the last 120 years.

* 1. **Intervention of the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF)**

The Secretary General of CAF, Mr. Víctor Rico, underscored the seriousness of the food situation, and agreed with prior speakers with respect to the importance that agrifood policies would have in countries’ recoveries.

Mr. Rico highlighted the importance of international trade in food security strategies and the facilitation of integration as a part of promoting trade. In this sense, he mentioned that progress had been made on the regulatory side of integration, in reducing tariffs; however, little had been done regarding sanitary regulations and at customs checkpoints, with a high cost for trade. This is an agenda that is inherent to integration organizations, MERCOSUR, the OAS, the Pacific Alliance, CARICOM, and others, which would make regional chains more dynamic.

Finally, he referred to the importance of promoting international initiatives that promote physical and health infrastructure projects and reactivate small and medium-sized enterprises. Such initiatives should be aimed at supporting countries in their economic recovery, not only the highly indebted countries, but also medium-income countries.

1. **Conclusions**

The interventions reveal a shared vision of ensuring chains, keeping trade open by avoiding the protectionism that prevailed during the 2007 crisis. There is a general concern about the social, employment, and health situation of rural workers. There is agreement on the need to achieve greater productivity and resilience in the food sector as a key sector in recovery strategies. The Caribbean and Central American regions are a priority in the reflections of the JSWG organizations, both because of these regions’ importance in food production, as well as their vulnerability.

The Secretary General of the OAS, Mr. Luis Almagro, thanked all the participants and invited them to continue this vein of discussions at technical meetings.

With that, Secretary General Almagro adjourned the meeting.

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1. . The Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG) consists of: The Organization of American States (OAS), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), the World Bank, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the Development Bank of Latin American (CAF), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Labor Organization (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)