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PRESENTATION BY THE PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION (PAHO)
ON PRIORITY ISSUES OF THE REGION

(Charlotte McDowell, Advisor, External Relations, Partnerships and Resource Mobilization)

- Honorable Vice Minister
- Honorable Ambassadors and distinguished delegates of OAS Member States,
- OAS Secretary General and Ambassador Lambert,
- Joint Summit Working Group Members,
- Observers and special guests,

PAHO recognizes the leadership of the Government of the Dominican Republic and the OAS Secretariat to open a dialogue that builds the agenda for the 10th Summit of the Americas based on regional priorities and challenges.

A crucial lesson from the COVID-19 pandemic is that health is central to our development, social, and economic agendas. A cornerstone of well-being, health is a central factor in closing equity gaps, protecting human rights, and enabling a productive and peaceful society.

As a result, we must endeavor to integrate health considerations into all the key issues facing the region: from mitigating the consequences of climate change on our health, to supporting the health of all populations impacted by migration, or to ensuring adequate food security to break the cycle of poverty and promote economic development, just to name a few.

As a central factor in addressing these and other regional challenges, it is even more important to recognize that health in the Americas remains an incomplete promise.

The region grapples with a challenging epidemiological scenario, characterized by:

- the persistence of communicable diseases such as dengue and malaria,
- the looming threat of new outbreaks and epidemics,

- the surge of non-communicable diseases such as cancer, diabetes and mental health challenges,
- Increasing rates of maternal mortality,
- health inequities, particularly for marginalized populations that are affected by discrimination and exclusion,
- and the health consequences of climate change.

In addition, the region is still suffering the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic: including an exacerbated decline in immunization rates, and a need to rebuild resilient health care systems with adequate financing, equitable access to medicines, and innovative digital technologies. The pandemic also evidenced the regional shortage of human resources for health, estimated at 600,000 healthcare workers.

These challenges confront us in the context of limited global attention and funding for a region characterized by middle-income countries.

We cannot surrender to pandemic fatigue, as the question is not if but when we will face another pandemic.

Mr. Chair,

The 10th Summit of the Americas is an opportunity to continue addressing regional health challenges and their linkages with other development priorities.

We know that health enables development and is the driver for a wide range of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

As we advance toward the 10th Summit of the Americas, PAHO is committed to innovative and holistic approaches based on collaboration across sectors.

PAHO stands ready to incorporate the human aspect of the complex challenges addressed by the 10th Summit of the Americas, and to work with Member States, Joint Summit Working Group members, and other stakeholders to advance development priorities.

Thank you Chair for the opportunity to share our perspective.