



Sistema Económico
Latinoamericano y del Caribe
Latin American and Caribbean
Economic System

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Latino-Americano e do Caribe
Système Economique
Latinoaméricain et Caribéen

Conclusions and recommendations

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The "XXII Meeting of International Cooperation Directors for Latin America and the Caribbean: Integration, Cooperation and Convergence for Health in Latin America and the Caribbean," organized by the Permanent Secretariat of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA), the Government of Panama, through the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) and the Ministry of Health (MINSAL), and the Perez Guerrero Trust Fund (PGTF) of the Group of 77 (G-77), was held on 29 and 30 September 2011 in Panama City.
2. Participants took note of the various informative documents prepared by the Permanent Secretariat of SELA about the social dimension of integration and the base documents and reports of meetings on integration, cooperation and convergence in the areas of health, e-Health and telemedicine, as well as other support documents and contributions made during the Regional Meeting by Member States and regional, subregional and international organizations.
3. In addition, participants recognized and appreciated the presentations made by representatives of subregional, regional and international organizations, institutions specializing in health in regional and subregional integration and cooperation schemes, bodies of the United Nations system, and representatives of international cooperation agencies and offices and health ministries of Member States of SELA. These presentations highlighted the progress and experiences being reported in the region in the areas of health, e-Health and telemedicine.
4. During the exchange of views and discussions on integration, cooperation and convergence for health in Latin America and the Caribbean, participants highlighted the following aspects:
 - a) Access to health services must be primarily understood as a fundamental human right. Therefore, health development and policies represent a priority for the governments in the region due to particularly their direct impact on the well-being of the most vulnerable sectors of society. Therefore, all possible measures must be taken to prevent the current global financial and economic crisis from leading to setbacks in the achievements made by the region, considering the limitations it confronts – in some cases – to comply with the Millennium Development Goals in the area of health.
 - b) Agencies, programmes and funds of the United Nations system, as well as other multilateral and international organizations, are developing important initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean in the area of health, which should be more effectively disclosed and spread, particularly among national health authorities, and regional and subregional integration and cooperation organizations.
 - c) However, it is necessary to continue promoting South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation in the areas of health, e-Health and telemedicine, among other priority issues within this sector. As part of these actions, a boost should be given to health projects and centres of excellence in the region and to exercises of offers and requests for cooperation that could be developed among Latin American and Caribbean countries, with the support of specialized institutions in regional and subregional cooperation and integration schemes.

- d) In this connection, it is necessary to reiterate the special features of South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation projects being implemented in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the basic principles of solidarity, complementarity, equality, non-conditionality and respect for sovereignty, which differ from the traditional Official Development Assistance.
- e) It is imperative to continue strengthening the regional and subregional entities specializing in health that have been created within the framework of regional and subregional integration and cooperation schemes in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as national authorities and institutions responsible for the design and implementation of health policies.
- f) The region has strong integration and cooperation institutions with technical and financial bodies and national projects and centres of excellence that would be able to promote more effectively and efficiently South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation for the development of health in our countries, based on a strong commitment and political will by regional governments and institutions.
- g) Therefore, it is necessary to coordinate actions among all subregional, regional and international actors that carry out cooperation activities in the area of health to avoid duplication of efforts, lack of schedule coordination and waste of time and resources.
- h) Regardless of the importance of international cooperation as a complement of national policies and programmes for the development of health, it is imperative for each country to strive to increase public investment in health and make it more efficient. In addition, this public investment should include the risk variable and take in the current indexes and indicators to protect the health infrastructure, so that it can continue operations in critical moments of an emergency or disaster.
- i) Participants reiterated the importance and validity of the Millennium Development Goals – especially those related to reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, and fighting HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. They also acknowledged the various initiatives undertaken in the region in the area of South-South Cooperation (Horizontal Cooperation) by the national focal points for cooperation, regional and subregional groups, and institutions specializing in the area of health. Among such initiatives, special recognition was made of the Ibero-American Programme “Support to Human Milk Banks”.
- j) The current global financial and economic crisis is affecting the availability of resources and budgets for cooperation programmes. This leads to reflecting and rethinking of ways to make cooperation more innovative, dynamic and participatory, by incorporating other cooperation actors – local governments, private sector and civil society organizations, among others – and to improve coordination and communication among regional and international organizations in order to make a more efficient use of scarce resources.

- k) The presentations made by the focal points in charge of international cooperation and the health ministries of the Member States of SELA highlighted the achievements and the diversity of initiatives for South-South and triangular cooperation being developed in the region, as well as the need to systematize, organize and spread information about successful experiences and best practices.
- l) Participants recommended to develop the various applications of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the area of health, particularly e-Health and telemedicine, and make some headway in interconnectivity.
- m) The countries of the region have implemented a wide variety of telehealth projects. Some of those projects have become models of best practices. However, many of them operate only while receiving funding – often from private sources – which makes it absolutely necessary to design and implement public policies to guarantee the validity of such projects and to take advantage of the potentials in Latin American and Caribbean countries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Participants recognized the need to continue working to reduce inequalities in the area of health in Latin America and the Caribbean, through coordinated action by various economic and social sectors and with the support of the regional integration and cooperation organizations, by strengthening spaces for inter-sectoral and inter-agency dialogue to promote policies, measures and actions aimed at improving access to essential health care goods and services for the most vulnerable sectors of the population.
2. Emphasis was made on the importance of providing further support and collaboration to regional and subregional integration and cooperation organizations, and to the institutions created within the context of mechanisms for health, while continuing to strengthen actions for their coordination and convergence.
3. Participants recognized that it is advisable to make progress as regards the exchange of offers and requests for Horizontal Cooperation and South-South Cooperation in the area of health, particularly by exchanging and spreading information about directories of national projects and centres of excellence, as well as databases of offers and requests for cooperation. The Permanent Secretariat will support such dissemination process through the information and outreach resources being used for systematization and compilation of opportunities for regional cooperation among its Member States.
4. Expressing their interest, participants made a recommendation for the Permanent Secretariat – in coordination with regional and subregional institutions specialized in health – to continue developing initiatives and conducting regional meetings, in accordance with the provisions of Decision 512 of the Latin American Council establishing the Programme “Integration and Convergence for Health in Latin America and the Caribbean” (INCOSALC).

5. Similarly, participants recommended to promote public policies in the areas of e-health and telemedicine, as an active part of National Health Systems. In this regard, it is necessary to clearly identify funding sources in order to ensure sustainability of those projects and services, and to quantify all the costs involved in designing, implementing and supporting e-Health and Telemedicine programmes.

6. Participants expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the authorities of the Government of Belize, which will host the next XXIII Meeting of International Cooperation Directors for Latin America and the Caribbean in 2012, whose central topic will be "Cooperation for agriculture and food security in Latin America and the Caribbean."

7. The delegations congratulated the Government of Panama – particularly the Ministry of Economy and Finance and the Ministry of Health – for their hospitality and cooperation, as well as the Permanent Secretariat of SELA and the Perez-Guerrero Trust Fund (PGTF) of the Group of 77 (G-77) for organizing this Regional Meeting.