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**STATUS UPDATE ON THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW OF
THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN CENTER
ON HEALTH SCIENCES INFORMATION (BIREME)**

Introduction

1. The purpose of this document is to inform the 48th Directing Council of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) on the status and progress of the institutional review of the Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information (hereinafter BIREME, or the Center), envisaging a new institutional framework for the governance, management, and financing of the Center.
2. BIREME is PAHO's specialized Pan American center for technical cooperation in health sciences information and communication. Established in São Paulo, Brazil, in 1967, its operations are aimed at the development of national and regional capacity and infrastructure for the management, dissemination, and facilitation of access to scientific information, knowledge and evidence, in keeping with international state-of-the-art methodologies and technologies. PAHO's technical cooperation through BIREME makes a significant contribution to the democratization of quality health information, which is key to health development and social inclusion in the Region of the Americas.
3. The formulation of a new institutional framework for BIREME responds to the recommendations of PAHO's Governing Bodies on the review and strengthening of all Pan American centers of the Organization, as well as the consultations and agreements between PAHO and the Government of Brazil.

Current Institutional, Legal, Management, and Financing Framework of BIREME

4. Since its creation in 1967, BIREME has operated under the legal framework of a Maintenance Agreement that is renewed every four or five years. The current Agreement will remain in effect until 30 December 2009.

5. That Agreement was signed by PAHO and the Government of Brazil, through the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the State Secretariat of Health of São Paulo, and the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP), whose campus hosts BIREME's physical facilities. The Agreement stipulates the responsibilities and regular financial contributions of each party. PAHO is responsible for the management of BIREME and provides the international staff and regular resources for its operation as approved in the PAHO regular budget by the Governing Bodies of the Organization. The international staff selected and financed by PAHO includes the Director of BIREME and three additional staff members. The Ministry of Health and the State Secretariat of Health of São Paulo contribute regular financial resources for BIREME's maintenance. Until recently, the Ministry of Education funded the annual subscriptions of a core collection of scientific journals and in the past six years, has gradually provided online access to them. The Federal University of São Paulo contributes with national staff, physical facilities, and its collection of scientific journals.

6. The contributions detailed in BIREME's Maintenance Agreement are supplemented by extrabudgetary financial resources derived from agreements and grants for specific projects, and by funds from the sale by BIREME of information products and services.

7. BIREME has an average annual budget of US\$ 6 million. Regular contributions under the Maintenance Agreement represent 31% of the Center's budget, including the 10.4% contribution of PAHO for international staff and regular budget for technical cooperation, and the 21% contribution derived from the Maintenance Agreement with the Government of Brazil, a figure which includes the national staff and infrastructure of the UNIFESP (9%) and the financial resources from the State Secretariat of Health of São Paulo (1%) and the Ministry of Health (11%). The Ministry of Education's contribution, represented by the provision of online access to health science journals, is not included in BIREME's annual budget.

8. It should be noted that 70% of BIREME's total budget comes from extrabudgetary resources, that is, from voluntary contributions related to agreements and grants for specific projects and the sale by BIREME of information products and services. These extrabudgetary resources are critical to the sustainable management of BIREME, especially since US\$ 3.6 million (65%) are allocated to staff wages. Thus, the management of BIREME's cash flow depends, on the one hand, on the timely

disbursement of the regular resources provided for in the Maintenance Agreement (at mid-year or in the first semester) and, on the other, on BIREME's ability to mobilize extrabudgetary resources. It is therefore important to provide BIREME with a budget that has a better balance between regular and extrabudgetary resources.

9. Notwithstanding the remarkable increase in the technical cooperation that BIREME provides to the Region of the Americas and the current status of the extrabudgetary resources that it generates, the institutional framework for BIREME's management and operation has not been substantially modified in its 41 years of existence. This means that BIREME's current institutional framework and Maintenance Agreement do not adequately meet its management, operational and financing needs.

10. The need to create a new institutional framework for BIREME has been the object of ongoing discussions between PAHO and the Government of Brazil in recent years. In fact, in the last renewal of the Maintenance Agreement in 2004, the signatories agreed on the need for change and included a clause in the Agreement specifically stating that BIREME and the signatories to the Agreement should promote the modification and development of the institutional structure and maintenance arrangement of BIREME, in keeping with national and international interests.

11. At the 138th Session of the Executive Committee, PAHO underscored the importance of BIREME's technical cooperation to the Region and noted the need to strengthen the institutional framework of the Center to afford it more sustainable legal, administrative, and financing conditions.

12. In August, 2007 PAHO, WHO, and the Government of Brazil signed the Technical Cooperation Strategy for PAHO and Federative Republic of Brazil, 2008-2012, reaffirming the need to amend the Maintenance Agreement "in order to strengthen and expand BIREME's capacity at the global, regional, and local level as an international cooperation center specialized in health information and communication sciences."

Toward a New Institutional Framework for BIREME

13. In light of the above, PAHO, in consultation with the Government of Brazil through the Ministry of Health, is in the process of developing a new institutional framework for BIREME, consisting of three legal instruments. The first would be a "Statute" of BIREME, which would maintain its institutional status as a specialized Pan American Center of PAHO and define its objectives, functions, membership, and legal framework for management, operations, and financing. The second would be a new Headquarters Agreement to be subscribed between PAHO and the Government of Brazil to replace the current Maintenance Agreement, establishing the respective technical and financial responsibilities of the parties, as well as the rights, privileges, and immunities of

the Center in Brazil. The third legal document to be developed would be a specific agreement between PAHO and the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP) covering BIREME's physical facilities on the University campus and updating the existing commitments related to the assignment of national staff, physical facilities, and the journal collection. UNIFESP would also support BIREME's management through its Foundations, which operate in the country under Brazilian law.

14. The new BIREME Statute proposes that "Member States of BIREME" be defined as all the Member States of PAHO. That is, the Statute would formally recognize the entire membership of PAHO as Members of BIREME. In addition, with a view to strengthening BIREME's international technical cooperation to other regions of the World Health Organization (WHO), the Statute includes the participation of WHO in its institutional structure and permits other WHO Member States (that are not members of PAHO) to participate in BIREME under a new membership category called "Participating Members of BIREME." Furthermore, the new BIREME Statute would also allow any international organization or agency with an interest or specific expertise in information and communication sciences to participate in the Center by designating a new membership category called "Participating Organizations of BIREME." It should be noted that under the new Statute, every Participating Member or Participating Organization admitted to BIREME would have to make financial/quota contributions to BIREME. PAHO Member States' membership in BIREME would entail no additional cost to them.

15. The Statute would also create a new institutional structure for BIREME, consisting of three bodies. The first would be an Advisory Committee, whose function would be to make recommendations to the Director of PAHO on the programmatic functions, work plan, and financing of the Center. This Advisory Committee would be comprised of PAHO, WHO and the Government of Brazil as permanent members, plus five representatives of the Member States of BIREME; that is, five PAHO Member States selected on a rotating basis by the Directing Council of PAHO, taking into account regional balance and technical expertise needed in the Advisory Committee. The second advisory body created by the new Statute would be the Scientific Council, whose function would be assist in the development of BIREME's programmatic functions; it would be comprised of scientific information specialists selected by the BIREME Advisory Committee. The third body established in the new Statute is the Secretariat of BIREME, whose function would be the technical execution of BIREME's program of work under the direction of an international Director appointed by and answerable to the Director of PAHO.

16. In addition to the institutional structure described above, the new Statute of BIREME will also provide for a stable and balanced source of financing which will include: (1) regular resources identified from PAHO's regular budget; (2) an annual

contribution from the Government of Brazil established pursuant to a new Basic Agreement to be subscribed with PAHO; (3) quota contributions from Participating States (Member States of WHO) and Participating Organizations that may join BIREME in the future; (4) resources derived from agreements, grants or donations for specific projects or programs; and (5) the sale of information products and services by BIREME.

17. The documents required to establish BIREME's new institutional framework as described above will be prepared by the Secretariat of PAHO in consultation with the Government of Brazil in the near future. The proposed Statute of BIREME will be introduced into PAHO's 2009 Governing Bodies' cycle for consideration and approval by the 49th Directing Council of PAHO. BIREME's new institutional framework should be fully operational by the end of 2009.

Action by the Directing Council

18. The 48th Directing Council of PAHO is invited to take note of the progress made to date in the institutional review of BIREME and provide guidance as to their expectations and perspectives on the future of BIREME .

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