



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



48th DIRECTING COUNCIL
60th SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

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RESOLUTION

CD48.R12

**TOWARDS THE ELIMINATION OF ONCHOCERCIASIS
(RIVER BLINDNESS) IN THE AMERICAS**

THE 48th DIRECTING COUNCIL,

Having reviewed the report of the Director, *Towards the Elimination of Onchocerciasis (River Blindness) in the Americas* (Document CD48/10);

Considering the human suffering and social costs associated with the loss of vision and deforming skin lesions attributable to onchocerciasis (river blindness), which poses a threat to approximately 500,000 at-risk people in the Americas;

Expressing appreciation for donor support to achieve global onchocerciasis control;

Noting that the 23rd Pan American Sanitary Conference, held in September 1990, issued a call to identify diseases that could be eliminated by the end of that century or the beginning of the next and that, in response, PAHO developed a regional strategy (Resolution CD35.R14, 1991) aimed at guaranteeing semiannual treatment to all communities that require it to eliminate onchocerciasis as a public health problem in the Americas by 2007;

Considering that in response to Resolution CD35.R14, an international initiative known as the Onchocerciasis Elimination Program in the Americas (OEPA) was launched in 1992 in cooperation with the governments, PAHO, nongovernmental organizations, donors, and other stakeholders;

Recognizing the significant progress made to date by the national authorities and the OEPA in onchocerciasis elimination in the Americas through the promotion and strengthening of programs in the six endemic countries of the Region (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Venezuela); and

Bearing in mind that the representatives of the six countries that attended the 17th Inter-American Conference on Onchocerciasis in 2007 and the OEPA Program Coordinating Committee (PCC) have made a commitment to achieving the interruption of onchocerciasis transmission throughout the Region by the end of 2012, followed immediately by a three-year epidemiological surveillance phase to certify elimination,

RESOLVES:

1. To urge the Member States to:
 - (a) reaffirm their commitment to the goal originally proposed in 1991 by the 35th Directing Council of the Pan American Health Organization in Resolution CD35.R14, which calls for achieving the elimination of morbidity from onchocerciasis in the Americas;
 - (b) complete the elimination of morbidity from onchocerciasis and interrupt transmission of the parasite within their borders by the year 2012, mobilizing all relevant sectors, affected communities, and NGOs through:
 - adequate financial support to ensure that national programs achieve treatment coverage of at least 85% of all eligible individuals;
 - effective utilization of donated treatments;
 - application of the WHO certification guidelines for the suspension of mass treatment.

- (c) invite other specialized agencies of the United Nations system, bilateral and multilateral development agencies, NGOs, foundations, and other stakeholders to:
- increase the availability of resources for national onchocerciasis elimination programs and the OEPA to completely eliminate transmission of the disease in the Region;
 - support the activities of the OEPA and its Program Coordinating Committee, made up of representatives from PAHO, the CDC, the Carter Center, the Ministries of Health, and onchocerciasis experts;
 - support and attend the Annual Inter-American Conferences on Onchocerciasis (IACO) and endorse the initiatives developed by, or in coordination with the OEPA Program Coordinating Committee (PCC).
2. To request the Director to:
- (a) support implementation of the WHO criteria for certifying the elimination of morbidity and transmission in the affected countries;
- (b) strengthen collaboration with the six endemic countries, especially along the Brazil-Venezuela border, where onchocerciasis affects the indigenous Yanomami population and that the Program be continued until the total elimination of the disease can be certified;
- (c) promote closer collaboration among onchocerciasis elimination programs in the Americas, the specialized agencies and organizations of the United Nations system, bilateral development agencies, and NGOs, as well as other stakeholders;
- (d) periodically report on progress in the implementation of activities.

(Eighth meeting, 2 October 2008)