

# *PAHO expresses concern about COVID-19 in Latin America*

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PAHO warns continued increase in COVID cases and deaths in Latin America

Washington, November 11 (RHC)-- The director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Carissa Etienne, warned on Wednesday about the current panorama of the Americas in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, referring to the increase of infections and the rate of vaccination in the region.

During her weekly press conference, the health official stressed the urgency of not relaxing measures because "this virus and its impact are not over yet" -- in a region that accumulates more than 2.3 million deaths and more than 92 of contagions, according to data provided by PAHO.

Etienne explained that the poor regional immunization coverage in some countries, together with the lack or breakdown of health protocols, could lead to the appearance of new variants of the coronavirus.

"There is a possibility that an endemic strain of COVID-19 could emerge in the region and we cannot afford that luxury."

"Primary care is the backbone of our health systems, as that is where COVID-19 testing, contact tracing and follow-up, and immunizations are performed," she said.

The PAHO director stressed that health is an investment and not an expense, "it functions as the core of vibrant societies. It keeps people working, children in school, businesses productive and economies growing," and urged all countries in the region to raise spending on health systems to 6 percent or more of their Gross National Domestic Product.

As well as ensuring that 30 percent of this funding goes to primary care. "There has never been a better time for countries to leverage these resources to maximize public investment in health," Etienne said.

The outlook for Sars-Cov-2 disease in the Americas over the past week showed 700,000 new infections and 13,000 deaths as a result of the disease.

Countries such as Colombia and Bolivia, and others in the Southern Cone, which have been experiencing an upward trend in their indicators, had a negative impact on these numbers, as did the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Cayman Islands and Dominica in the Caribbean.

While Cuba, Jamaica and Puerto Rico have experienced decreases in their infection indicators, at the same time as a growth in general vaccination in Latin America and the Caribbean, which has reached 48 percent of the population.

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