Pan American Health Organization

IN REPLY REFER TO: CIM-150-26

13 November 2026

Sir:

In 1994, Member States of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) committed to eliminate endemic measles, a goal achieved in 2016, when an International Expert Commission (IEC) of PAHO verified that all countries in the Region were free of measles. This achievement represented an unprecedented milestone in global public health and was made possible by the strong political commitment and sound technical capacity of all Member States.

However, measles elimination remains fragile due to the continued virus circulation in other regions of the world and the ongoing risk of imported cases back into countries in the Americas. Venezuela, Brazil, and Canada re-established endemic measles transmission in 2018, 2019, and 2025, respectively. Through the implementation of intensive control measures, strengthened vaccination efforts, and coordinated national and regional responses, Venezuela and Brazil regained their measles-free status in 2023 and 2024, respectively, while Canada has made significant progress in controlling its outbreak. These experiences underscore the importance of maintaining high and homogeneous vaccination coverage, sensitive surveillance, and a rapid response to imported cases to preserve and, when necessary, regain measles elimination status.

To monitor the sustainability of the elimination of measles, rubella, and congenital rubella syndrome (CRS), the Measles and Rubella Elimination Regional Monitoring and Re-Verification Commission (RVC) was convened in 2019. The RVC reports to the Director of PAHO and works in close collaboration with national sustainability commissions (NSC). Both the RVC and NSCs are composed of internationally recognized independent experts who support the monitoring and re-verification processes. To fulfill its mandate, the RVC meets annually to review the country reports submitted to assess progress toward maintaining or recovering elimination status.

In 2026, the RVC meeting was held in Washington, D.C., 10-13 November. Following a thorough review of the comprehensive evidence presented in the report of the United States and a session with members of its NSC and other national health authorities, it was determined that a single measles chain of transmission, which commenced on 20 January 2025, has persisted for more than twelve months in the United States. This finding provides sufficient evidence to conclude that the United States has re-established endemic measles transmission, despite the government's efforts to interrupt transmission. Consequently, the country has lost its measles elimination status and is now classified as endemic for measles. The elimination status for rubella and congenital rubella syndrome in the United States remains unchanged.

./..

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy Jr.
Secretary for Health
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20201

We commend the significant efforts undertaken by the United States to manage the measles outbreak through strengthened surveillance, timely case detection and response, targeted vaccination activities, and coordination across the public health system. We encourage the United States to intensify these efforts until transmission is interrupted and the outbreak is fully controlled, honoring the commitment made by countries in the Americas in 1994 to achieve and sustain a measles-free future for the peoples of the Americas.

We are always concerned that the resurgence of endemic measles transmission could have severe negative health and societal consequences, including preventable deaths, particularly among vulnerable populations, such as children under five years of age. Consequently, countries that lose their measles elimination status are required to submit a corrective action plan outlining the strategies to regain their elimination status. I am fully confident that the United States will continue to take the necessary actions that will lead to the reclassification of your country as measles-free.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your willingness to share country data and the valuable technical contributions provided throughout the assessment process.

Finally, I wish to reiterate that PAHO remains a committed and dedicated partner, ready to provide any necessary cooperation and support throughout this process, with a view to restoring measles elimination across the Region of the Americas.

Sincerely yours,



Jarbas Barbosa da Silva Jr.
Director

cc: Dr. Matthew Ferreira, Counselor, Immediate Office of the Secretary,
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and
Deputy Director for Global Health,
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Ms. Bethany Kozma, Director,
Office of Global Affairs, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Dr. Erica Schwartz, Director,
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention