Foreword by Alejandro E. Svarch, Federal Commission for Protection against Sanitary Risks

The covid-19 pandemic was a major challenge for all. The closing of borders highlighted the dependence of different regions of Latin America and the Caribbean on the major powers. As a result, we faced a serious limitation of access to strategic inputs such as therapeutic resources.

Throughout history, these therapeutic resources have been represented as medicinal plants, remedies, drugs of natural or industrial origin, and even vaccines and medical devices. But how do we know if they are harmful or not? What if they cause harm when taken or used? Who ensures their quality or that they serve their stated purpose? There is only one answer to these questions: health regulation through national regulatory authorities (NRA), such as the Federal Commission for Protection against Sanitary Risks (COFEPRIS). Within the framework of regulatory science, NRA are hard at work building and strengthening disciplines and policies, as well as establishing standards and regulations to ensure the protection of public health, and the safety and welfare of society at large.

In Mexico, although sanitary inspections of apothecaries were carried out during the colonial period, it was not until 1927 that the first drug registration was achieved. This was a legislative milestone in terms of sanitary regulation in our country. Today, COFEPRIS regulates almost 300 economic activities (including food, beverages, pharmaceuticals, pesticides, toxic waste), representing the regulation of 44 cents of every peso spent by Mexican families. One example is the country's pharmaceutical industry,

which in registering a GDP of more than USD 350 million in 2023 makes it the second largest market in the Americas, after Brazil.

All these elements lead us to several key points of sanitary regulation, represented in the articles in this issue. One of the main problems identified, connected to the significant economic weight of regulated industries, is corruption within the public administration. This type of corruption is a cross-cutting issue for many countries around the world, with the resultant need to analyze the problem at its root and develop strategies to prevent and halt it.

There are other key points; on the one hand, as mentioned at the beginning, the importance of demanding exhaustive safety tests and national and international monitoring of the entire life cycle of such essential therapeutic resources as drugs, vaccines and medical devices, as well as surveillance and control over their consumption. On the other hand, the pandemic obliged us to recognize the need for cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE), the governments of the Americas region, international organizations, scientific expertise, and the private sector.

Finally, another underlying problem that affected several of the regulatory authorities in the Americas region was the lack of continuous training in regulatory science for health professionals and the staff of those authorities. In response to this, thanks to the solidarity and joint efforts between Mexican foreign policy and the regulatory authorities of Latin America and the Caribbean, initiatives such as the Regional School of Sanitary Regulation have been promoted.

I am pleased to present this issue of the *Revista Mexicana de Política Exterior* and thank both the Matías Romero Institute and the COFEPRIS team for their coordination efforts. I am confident that the articles found herein can offer readers an account of the transformation efforts of our regulatory authority, something that would not have been possible without the close collaboration with the SRE on issues such as those presented here.

Creating an equitable synergy between institutions with the same mission is hard work. However, our reward is achieving regional health and regulatory self-sufficiency, in order to place quality, safe and effective therapeutic resources in the hands of the population.