Statement by Whitney Debevoise  
Date of Meeting: February 23, 2010

**Argentina – Emergency Project for the Prevention and Management of Influenza Type Illness and Strengthening of Argentina’s Epidemiological System**

We appreciate the opportunity to consider this important emergency operation for Argentina and, as the United States weatheres the H1N1 pandemic, we understand the priority. We also appreciate staff efforts to respond to our questions.

We recognize that this project has a significant capacity building aspect to it and what seems like an appropriate balance between strengthening systems and controlling epidemic waves. We also believe the operation strikes a balance between reimbursing the government for expenses incurred during the first outbreak of the pandemic and preparing for future outbreaks.

With caution we note the concerns related to the project implementation unit and ongoing INT investigations of health sector projects in Argentina. We also note that procurement risk only drops from high to substantial after mitigation measures. Like staff, we are concerned that the increased flexibility and nature of this emergency operation further exposes the project to increased risk. We appreciate the increased attention to the PIU, and we count on management to use awareness of potential shortcomings, along with the action plan for strengthening the PIU, to make sure the resources reach their intended destination. If it does not, we will not support similar situations in the future.

The results framework contains robust measures, but we wonder how monitoring and evaluation will be impacted by capacity issues in the project implementation unit.

Similar to the Nicaragua Health Systems project, we can support the requested waiver should contracting with PAHO become necessary. We require, however, assurances that PAHO, if engaged in this project, is doing so as the regional arm of the WHO. Only in this capacity does PAHO receive the privileges and immunities analogous to those of a UN agency.

With these comments we wish the government success in its implementation of this important intervention.