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Inter-American Council for Integral Development
(CIDI)



**FIFTH MEETING OF MINISTERS AND HIGH-LEVEL
AUTHORITIES OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

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DRAFT ANNOTATED AGENDA

"Strengthening Hemispheric Cooperation towards Resilient Reconstruction and Sustainable Social Development in the Americas"

A. BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered what several researchers call a "triple combined and asymmetric" (health, economic, and social) crisis in the region^{1/}: Although this crisis has had a global impact, Latin America and the Caribbean have been its epicenter, suffering the greatest socioeconomic impacts and accounting for more than 30% of deaths due to this cause worldwide, despite representing only 8% of the total population.^{2/} Thus, the especially severe effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the region are largely explained by pre-existing conditions, revealing and exacerbating long-standing institutional and financial shortcomings, inequalities, and social injustices that severely impair the capacity of States to protect their populations and provide the minimum guarantees needed to confront what is considered the worst health and economic crisis of the century.^{3/} In addition, certain critical facets are emerging that – if not addressed by recovery strategies– threaten to exacerbate persistent challenges, such as migration processes, digital divides, climate change, and environmental disasters that are increasingly recurrent and diverse in terms of their origin and characteristics.

To confront this crisis and its multiple consequences, it is essential to establish a basic standard of social protection that facilitates the fulfillment of three key strategic objectives: sustaining minimum levels of economic demand, guaranteeing a basic income, or a universal welfare floor, and, thereby, being able to design strategies that make it possible to enact more or less restrictive containment measures without condemning a significant part of the population to poverty or extreme poverty.^{4/} Member states have ratified instruments such as the OAS Charter, the Inter-American Democratic Charter and the Social Charter of the Americas and have made a commitment to the principles of equal

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1. F. Filgueira et al., **América Latina ante la crisis del COVID-19: vulnerabilidad socioeconómica y respuesta social**, Políticas Sociales series, No. 238, Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2020. Available at: https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/46484/1/S2000718_es.pdf
 2. UNDP (2020) **The socio-economic implications of the COVID-19 pandemic: Ideas for action in public policy**. Available at: <https://n9.cl/1oq02> (Spanish)
 3. ECLAC (2021) **The Paradox of Recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean. Growth with persistent structural problems: inequality, poverty, underinvestment, and low productivity**. Available at: https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/47043/5/S2100379_es.pdf
 4. F. Filgueira et al., **América Latina ante la crisis del COVID-19: vulnerabilidad socioeconómica y respuesta social**, Políticas Sociales series, No. 238, Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2020. Available at: https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/46484/1/S2000718_es.pdf

opportunity and social inclusion,^{5/} with this meeting constituting one of the strategies for action to address the commitments entered into.

Effectively addressing these challenges requires stepping up multisectoral efforts to contribute to post-crisis recovery and continuing to address the multiple dimensions of inequalities and poverty comprehensively, by facilitating the identification of effective policies to overcome structural barriers to access to opportunities for the entire population. To contribute to that goal, the OAS has two key tools at its disposal: political/technical dialogue and regional cooperation. As stated in the Organization's 2016-2020 Comprehensive Strategic Plan^{6/}: the OAS brings together ministers and high authorities to discuss shared challenges, work on solutions, and establish priorities for joint action. Through the exchange of best practices and lessons learned in the design and implementation of public policies, member states identify key areas for action in the area of social development and inclusion and expand their capacity to formulate and manage effective public policies that would otherwise be difficult to pursue. Thus, this hemispheric approach includes comprehensive intersectoral actions that help expedite the pace of development in the region.^{7/} It should be noted that one of the distinguishing aspects of this forum for social development, as opposed to others proposed by other international organizations working in this field, refers to the central role played by the exchange of views between public policy makers linked to the OAS member states.

Following these guidelines, the Fifth Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of Social Development (V REMDES) entitled: "**Strengthening Hemispheric Cooperation towards Resilient Reconstruction and Sustainable Social Development in the Americas**" seeks to generate a space for dialogue on the role that social protection must play to overcome the challenges posed by inclusion and integral development in the Hemisphere, as well as to confront the crises and natural disasters that affect the region through greater institutional and social resilience, based on social and fiscal pacts that make protection strategies financially sustainable.

In addition, it is important that the OAS, as the only inter-American entity with a strategy in which the vast majority of the region's governments participate, adopt an "Inter-American Declaration of Priorities in Social Development" that establishes lines of action that, aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in coordination with other institutions of the global and inter-American system, will enable countries to make significant progress in promoting social development in general, and in the recovery of social well-being post-COVID-19 in particular.

The General Secretariat, through the Secretariat for Access to Rights and Equity/Department of Social Inclusion, promotes the work of the Organization of American States in the area of social development at the political and technical levels. Between 2008 and 2019^{8/}, thanks to political dialogue among the member states, four ministerial meetings were held on the subject, which resulted in agreement regarding priorities for action at the regional level and made it possible to identify and promote opportunities for cooperation in this area. At the technical programmatic level, the guidelines

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5. Organization of American States (OAS) (sf). **Inequality and Social Inclusion in the Americas, 14 essays.** (Second Edition). Available at: <https://www.oas.org/docs/desigualdad/libro-desigualdad.pdf>
 6. Adopted by the member states on October 31, 2016, through General Assembly resolution AG/RES.1 (LI-E/16)
 7. CIDI/REMDES/doc.125/16 rev. 4. Work plan for analyzing the development pillar of the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan
 8. REMDES held to date: Reñaca, Chile (2008), Cali, Colombia (2010), Asunción, Paraguay (2016), and Guatemala City (2019).

established by the forum of ministers and high authorities of social development have prompted specific instances of hemispheric cooperation based on bilateral and multilateral solidarity.

B. PROPOSED TOPICS

1. Consideration and formalization of decisions on the following items:

- a. The election of the Chair;
- b. The constitution of the Style Committee;
- c. The final agenda of the meeting;
- d. The designation of committees and working groups;
- e. Agreement on the deadline for the presentation of proposals;
- f. The duration of the meeting;
- g. Other matters.

In accordance with the Rules of Procedure for Sectoral and Specialized Meetings at the Ministerial and/or High-Level Authorities Level of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI).

2. Adoption of the draft schedule. A brief timetable for the holding of the Meeting will be agreed upon.

3. Report of the Technical Secretariat and the Inter-American Committee on Social Development (CIDES) in follow-up to the IV Meeting of Ministers and High Authorities of Social Development (IV REMDES)

The Technical Secretariat will submit a report on the implementation of the mandates of the IV REMDES.

4. Current socioeconomic context of the Americas: conditions of poverty and inequality after the health crisis

5. Social Protection Systems in the region in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

The harmful impacts of the current crisis and the actions taken to deal with it demonstrate the urgency of moving towards the construction of universal, comprehensive, and sustainable social protection systems. In a broad sense, social protection has been construed as "a set of measures aimed at building fairer and more inclusive societies, and guaranteeing minimum standards of living for all."^{9/} It thus constitutes "a fundamental mechanism to contribute to the realization of the economic, social, and cultural rights of the population,"^{10/}

9. ECLAC(2015). **Social protection systems in Latin America and the Caribbean: A comparative perspective.** Available at:
https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/36831/1/S2014250_es.pdf [for English see:https://ipcig.org/sites/default/files/pub/en/OP284_Social_Protection_Systems_in_Latin_America_and_the_Caribbean_A_Comparative_Perspective.pdf

10. ECLAC(2015). **Social protection systems in Latin America and the Caribbean: A comparative perspective.** Available at:
https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/36831/1/S2014250_es.pdf

recognized in several binding normative instruments of the universal^{11/} and regional human rights system^{12/} as well as in the commitments emanating from the 2030 Agenda.^{13/}

In the OAS, social protection has been addressed on a recurring basis through political-technical dialogue at past Meetings of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of Social Development (REMDES) and through technical cooperation with the creation of the Inter-American Social Protection Network (RIPSO), as the main mechanism for promoting regional cooperation and strengthening national social protection systems, a network that is to be reactivated as of this V REMDES. In 2019, during the Fourth Meeting of Ministers and High Authorities of Social Development (IV REMDES), the OAS member states made a commitment to a “move towards the development of universal and comprehensive social protection systems with an approach based on respect for human rights, on the principles of universality, solidarity, equality, non-discrimination and equity (...) particularly, for groups in situations of vulnerability and to promote research and impact assessments as a tool for decision-making.”^{14/}

In recent decades, the region has made significant progress in the area of social protection by strengthening regulatory frameworks, expanding coverage, improving instruments for targeting and monitoring social protection policies, and launching income generation initiatives to complement and enhance the effect of cash transfer programs which, together with the actions deployed to contain and mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, reveal the capacities of the States to strengthen non-contributory programs, use social protection tools, identify potential recipients, and reach the most vulnerable. However, the crisis also revealed structural inequalities that persist in current social protection systems. To address current challenges and continue empowering the beneficiaries of social programs in the quest for income alternatives, the region requires a renewed focus on public policy design and management in this regard.

Discussing social protection systems in the region would entail covering multiple issues that are interconnected and operate together. Therefore, in order to make dialogue viable and dynamic, the ministers and high-level social development authorities will focus on promoting the exchange of information and lessons learned in connection with the topics mentioned below, which are intended to provide an overview of the central aspects involved.

a) Adaptive and resilient social protection for the management and mitigation of risks in the event of emergencies and socioenvironmental disasters

Given the increasing occurrence of environmental disasters, much more attention is being paid to the notion of adaptive and reactive social protection in the face of

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11. Such as the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) of 1966.
 12. The American Convention on Human Rights of 1969, and its Additional Protocol on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, "Protocol of San Salvador" of 1999, as well as the Social Charter of the Americas.
 13. Sustainable Development Goals, target 1.3 of the 2030 Agenda. Available at: https://www.agenda2030.gob.es/recurros/docs/METAS_DE_LOS_ODS.pdf
 14. Document **Inter-American Declaration of Priorities in Social Development**, emanating from the IV REMDES, Guatemala, 2019.

emergencies.^{15/} This approach aims to increase the efficiency of social programs to address and reduce current and future risks by promoting social protection measures adapted to climate change, thereby reducing social vulnerability to environmental risks in the long term.^{16/}

From this perspective, social information systems play a fundamental role in terms of prevention (prior identification of the risk and vulnerability of households), self-selection (affected people request registration to be eligible for social programs), immediate recording (gathering of information after the occurrence of a disaster) and adjustments (use of existing information systems).^{17/}

In this regard, the OAS member states have emphasized that the coordination of social protection policies and measures for mitigation and adaptation to environmental challenges can contribute to reducing the risks to which vulnerable population groups and the most vulnerable regions, especially the Caribbean, are most exposed.^{18/} To broaden this discussion, the dialogue in this plenary session will explore the potential of social protection to respond to climate change and discuss how social protection policies can be effectively linked to global hazard risk management policies and programs.

b) Sustainability of social protection systems

The COVID-19 pandemic has put social protection systems worldwide to the test, exposing pre-existing – and currently exacerbated – gaps in their coverage, comprehensiveness, and aptness, due to still insufficient public investment in social protection. The significant increase in unemployment and poverty levels, together with the sharp fall in investment, limit the ability of the region's economies to mobilize resources in a context where the high level of indebtedness resulting from lower tax collection, together with the increase in transfers to support households and businesses, increase countries' liquidity needs and undermines their ability to guarantee sustainable and equitable investments in social protection. However, crises and disasters can be transformed into opportunities to forge innovative solutions and improve the effectiveness and sustainability of social protection systems considering that both political will and financing have been highlighted as crucial factors for developing a protection plan in response to crises.^{19/}

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15. Davies, M. et al. (2008), "Climate Change Adaptation, Disaster Risk Reduction and Social Protection", Brighton: Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex.
 16. C. Robles and C. Rossel, "Herramientas de protección social para enfrentar los efectos de la pandemia de COVID-19 en la experiencia de América Latina", Project Documents (LC/TS.2021/135), Santiago, (ECLAC), 2021. Available at: https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/47412/1/S2100613_es.pdf
 17. C. Robles and C. Rossel, "Herramientas de protección social para enfrentar los efectos de la pandemia de COVID-19 en la experiencia de América Latina", Project Documents (LC/TS.2021/135), Santiago, (ECLAC/CEPAL), 2021. Available at: https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/47412/1/S2100613_es.pdf
 18. Document "Inter-American Declaration of Priorities in Social Development", emanating from the IV REMDES, Guatemala, 2019.
 19. ECLAC (2021) An innovative financing for development agenda for the recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean. Available at: <https://repositorio.cepal.org/handle/11362/47490>

Achieving this progress mainly requires more and better investment, along with a new integrated approach that can go beyond sectoral specialization to address issues of income and wealth redistribution. The courses of action proposed for sustainability focus on integrating the economic and political empowerment of the most vulnerable groups; empowering small businesses, rural producers and informal workers; promoting gender equality; consolidating changes in North-South power relations and in global governance institutions; thereby activating a structural paradigm shift to realign economic objectives with social and environmental objectives. To this end, it is imperative to move forward with the necessary fiscal reforms and progressive taxation systems and to expand multilateral financing and debt relief measures in line with countries' needs.^{20/}

Given that social protection has numerous beneficial impacts on human development with the potential to drive the economy by boosting its growth,^{21/} member states are called upon to work collectively to foster the necessary integration synergies. This meeting will promote dialogue between governments and other international stakeholders to discuss alternatives for efficient management of public spending in this area and the identification of optimal balances between different forms of financing; opportunities to increase budgets; policy options; and the promotion of solidarity in financing, among others.

c) Innovations through the incorporation of new technologies to address current social problems

The COVID-19 crisis has had an impact on the way in which governments manage their social protection policies and, in particular, on the way in which they provide benefits to their populations. The health measures adopted and the need to respond promptly to social demands have encouraged governments to use and take advantage of digital technologies to simplify and expedite the process of accessing benefits and to expand data collection and facilitate cross-checking of information between public institutions in such a way as to validate information on recipients with a view to making more timely and efficient decisions.^{22/}

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20. ECLAC, (2021). Disasters and inequality in a protracted crisis: Towards universal, comprehensive, resilient and sustainable social protection systems in Latin America and the Caribbean. Available at: <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/47376-disasters-and-inequality-protracted-crisis-towards-universal-comprehensive>
 21. ILO (2022) Investing more in universal social protection. Filling the financing gap through domestic resource mobilization and international support and coordination. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/working-papers/WCMS_834194/lang--en/index.htm
 22. CEPAL (2021) Herramientas de protección social para enfrentar los efectos de la pandemia de COVID-19 en la experiencia de América Latina. [ECLAC (2021) Social protection tools to face the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Latin American experience.] Available at: https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjUyJDT631AhVgrJUCHQPHAZEQFnoECAkQAO&url=https%3A%2F%2Frepositorio.cepal.org%2Fbitstream%2Fhandle%2F11362%2F47412%2F1%2FS2100613_es.pdf&usq=AOvVawIymCsbi3pF-jdKuVgDRZt7

In several cases, the innovations have been adaptations of pre-pandemic processes, protocols, or regulations, where certain requirements for access to emergency benefits have been eliminated or access conditionalities have been suspended. One of the most useful means to facilitate access and prevent infection has been the use of cell phone and mobile banking apps; however, these strategies reveal digital divides^{23/} that make it difficult to support the groups hardest hit by the pandemic. This digital divide is directly linked to social inequality when combined with other factors of exclusion, such as economic capacity, amount of time available, knowledge, and skills, as well as cultural and linguistic background.^{24/} Additionally, available data indicate that the digital divide is widened by gender^{25/} and ethnicity factors,^{26/} as women and ethnic groups are among the populations that report the greatest difficulties in developing digital skills, as well as in accessing the Internet and information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Although the region has experienced an unprecedented technological revolution, access to mobile telephony, Internet, and bank accounts is still scarce in several countries and geographical locations. In addition, there are high levels of digital illiteracy among the elderly and people from low-income households^{27/} and although some countries have offered a wider range of alternative measures to ensure access to the corresponding benefits, it is important to consider these factors in order to design strategies capable of bridging the gaps by taking advantage of the potential of ICTs to build a digitally inclusive future.

At the global level, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development highlights the role of ICTs as a major tool for accelerating human progress. For the first time, the III REMDES^{28/} discussed the role of ICTs and digital literacy in poverty reduction and the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the Americas. This topic is taken up again at the current meeting, where the participating authorities will discuss how digital innovations, telecommunications, and ICTs can be harnessed to strengthen social protection systems in the region, ensuring the inclusion of the most vulnerable social

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23. The term "digital divide" refers to the existing differences between individuals, households, companies, and geographic areas of different socioeconomic levels, in relation to their opportunities to access information and communication technologies (ICT) and use the Internet. Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) <https://www.oecd.org/sti/1888451.pdf>
 24. Castaño, C. (2008). *The Second Digital Divide and Young Women*. Madrid, Spain: Ediciones Cátedra. Available at: <Http://www.ub.edu/geocrit/b3w-825.htm>
[For English, see: https://www.academia.edu/1550242/The_Second_Digital_Divide_and_Young_Women]
 25. World Economic Forum (WEF) *Global Gender Gap Report, 2021*. Available at: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf
 26. ECLAC (2003) *Road Maps towards an information society in Latin America and the Caribbean* Santiago, Chile. Available at: https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/23572/S034235_en.pdf
 27. ECLAC (2021) *Disasters and inequality in a protracted crisis: towards universal, comprehensive, resilient and sustainable social protection systems in Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/CDS.4/3)*, Santiago. Available at: <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/47376-disasters-and-inequality-protracted-crisis-towards-universal-comprehensive>
 28. *Final Report of the Third Meeting of Ministers and High Authorities of Social Development*. Available at: <http://www.oas.org/es/sadye/remdes/default.asp>

sectors. Participants will share information regarding actual experiences on policies and programs – established prior to the pandemic or designed and adapted to address its effects –, with emphasis on the role of the private sector, communities, local governments, and nongovernmental organizations in the implementation of these types of initiative.

d) Perspectives on Universal Basic Income: opportunities and challenges for its implementation

As mentioned earlier, the impact of the pandemic on the reduction of household incomes, especially of the most vulnerable, has been devastating. This situation has prompted contemporary debates on the alternatives of universal or targeted basic income. Recently, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) published a paper arguing how unconditional emergency assistance is an urgent, fair, and feasible way to avoid further impoverishment as a result of the pandemic. Thus, unconditional cash transfers can make people spend more money on their diet and potentially improve health outcomes and school attendance; they can help protect people's assets and enable them to diversify their livelihoods; and they can have a substantive impact on reducing gender inequalities.^{29/} It has been estimated that the total cost of implementing this type of policy would be relatively moderate considering the high positive impact on protecting people from poverty (equivalent to 0.27% and 0.63% of the combined monthly GDP of developing countries).^{30/}

On the other hand, various ways of administering universal/temporary basic income policies have been investigated, such as: supplements to existing incomes among people living in or at risk of poverty, up to a minimum level that is at least 70% above the poverty line; lump sum transfers equivalent to half the income of the average citizen; uniform lump sum transfers regardless of the country where the person lives, among others. The optimal choice will depend on the particular context of each country. For example, the former will only work in countries where registration systems contain accurate information on what people earn. In countries where such systems are non-existent or incomplete, the other options outlined above may be a better fit. Experts have therefore recommended recognizing the right to universal basic income, tailoring its distribution to the needs of the population.^{31/}

Considering a policy of this type also implies recognizing at least three central obstacles: administrative capacity - it would be mandatory to have complete and updated digital population records; financing, – explore alternatives: reuse of non-essential expenditures, pause debt repayments for a time, use of cash transfers to cover immediate essential consumption, some of which would be recovered through indirect

29. "Jobs done by women around the world tend to be lower paid, if paid at all, often lack social protection and safety nets... by providing women with economic independence." <https://www.undp.org/press-releases/undp-calls-temporary-basic-income-help-worlds-poorest-women-cope-effects-covid-19>

30. For more detailed data, see the source: UNDP (2020) *Temporary Basic Income*. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/publications/temporary-basic-income-tbi>

31. Idem.

taxes, which would provide some degree of self-financing; and, trust (the third obstacle) – it is essential to have a high level of political and social support.^{32/}

Most observers agree that these policy schemes do not reverse countries' economic recessions or replace social protection systems. However, they could potentially mitigate the most severe immediate effects of crises and disasters. It is therefore hoped that the V REMDES will encourage the multilateral dialogue needed to move ahead with the construction of more innovative and effective measures tailored to each country's social circumstances for the eradication of poverty and inequalities.

**e) International migration-sensitive policies as part of social protection systems:
A preventive approach to irregular migration and social reintegration
opportunities for returned migrants**

In today's globalized world, migration plays a central role in countries' economic development. As a global challenge that exposes deficiencies in socioeconomic inclusion mechanisms, migration is a common denominator in all regions of the world. In Latin America and the Caribbean, flows of people crossing territorial borders are part of the daily life of receiver, sender, or transit countries. In recent years migration has become a major priority issue on the international development agenda, not only because of its expansion and diversification, but also because it has become evident how migrants have been a segment of the population historically neglected by public policies in general, and by social protection systems in particular.^{33/}

Hence, the importance and urgency of identifying alternatives in social protection policies to guarantee their rights, addressing their specific requirements at each stage of the migratory cycle, depending on the life cycle and the environment in which they find themselves; commitments that also require an institutional and legal framework that allows access to basic social protection regardless of migratory status.

In addition, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have had a particular and specific impact on migrants. In all countries for which information is available, unemployment among immigrants has increased more than among the inhabitants of the country they have moved to. Not only has their economic income decreased drastically; they have also been more exposed to health risks (as many of them work in sectors at the front line of the pandemic), and to vulnerabilities related to, for example, housing conditions and poverty.^{34/} Therefore, if a truly inclusive recovery is to be achieved, it will be essential to have migration policies integrated into the social protection matrix, capable of promoting preventive actions and alternatives to irregular migration, as well as enhancing opportunities for the reintegration of returned migrants.

32. ILO (2005) Universal basic income and social dialogue. Available at:
<https://www.oitcinterfor.org/node/5713>

33. ECLAC. 2018. Social protection and migration. A look at the vulnerabilities and the life of the persons during the migration process.
[Spanish: https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/publication/files/44021/S1800613_es.pdf]

34. OECD. COVID-19 crisis puts migration and integration progress at risk.
<https://www.oecd.org/migration/covid-19-crisis-puts-migration-and-progress-on-integration-at-risk.htm>

The Meeting will provide an opportunity for specialists and public policy managers to discuss the challenges associated with the social and labor inclusion of migrants, identifying priority courses of action. In addition, the "Regional Guidelines for the Social Inclusion of Survivors of Trafficking in Persons in the Americas", developed jointly by the OAS and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), will be presented as a guide for the identification of key areas of intervention and for the planning and implementation of concrete actions to enable the active participation of this population group in the social and economic life of the communities where they reside.

6. Labor market and social protection: productive-labor inclusion and promotion of formality, with emphasis on access to social security, as strategies to reduce inequalities and eradicate poverty

Despite the progressive economic recovery, unemployment rates, and levels of poverty and extreme poverty persist in the region that are higher than those observed before the COVID-19 pandemic. By 2021, the extreme poverty rate had reportedly reached 13.8% and the poverty rate 32.1%. Therefore, compared to 2020 figures, the number of people in extreme poverty by 2021 had reportedly increased by four million, while the total number of people in poverty decreased slightly.^{35/} It is worth remembering that income is a relevant indicator in the measurement of poverty, but it is not sufficient to understand the various deprivations faced by people living in poverty. Given that poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon, it is necessary to continue promoting and strengthening national poverty measurement strategies that take into account its multidimensional nature and make it possible to develop more efficient mechanisms to eradicate it.

Several recent analyses,^{36/} point to the severe repercussions of the health crisis on the global labor market. At the regional level, there has been an unprecedented decline in participation in the labor market, especially affecting women, who have taken on most of the burden of unpaid care work, which, together with the reduction in employment in domestic services, has caused the female participation rate to fall to levels similar to those of 2002. Given the conditions characterizing the current crisis, the traditional adjustment mechanism through which households resorted to informal sector jobs did not prevail; on the contrary, informal workers were one of the segments of the population hardest hit by the increase in the unemployment rate in the region.^{37/} Thus, States are called upon to bear in mind these facets of the crisis in connection with social protection responses aimed at recovery with greater social justice.

35. ECLAC (2022) Social Panorama of Latin America 2021 . Available at:

<https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/47719-social-panorama-latin-america-2021>

36. To name a few: ECLAC (2020), Social Panorama of Latin America (LC/PUB.2021/2-P), Santiago. <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/46688-social-panorama-latin-america-2020>

37. CEPAL (2021) Herramientas de protección social para enfrentar los efectos de la pandemia de COVID-19 en la experiencia de América Latina. [ECLAC (2021) Social protection tools to face the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Latin American experience.] Available at: https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjUyJDTr631AhVgrJUCHQPHAZEQFnoECAkQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Frepositorio.cepal.org%2Fbitstream%2Fhandle%2F11362%2F47412%2F1%2FS2100613_es.pdf&usg=AOvVaw1ymCsbi3pF-jdKuVgDRZt7

Social policies established prior – and in some cases adapted – to the health situation, were expanded and diversified, and constituted a broad portfolio of interventions including initiatives supplementing cash transfer programs. Thus, countries have incorporated, as part of their social protection matrix, interventions that promote the productive inclusion of lower-income segments of the population, by developing productive enterprises, alternatives driven by the social and solidarity-based economy, and the increase of employability by promoting the formalization and growth of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, partly by enhancing access to financial services.^{38/} These interventions have become tools for social inclusion, with a direct impact on improving the income of the most vulnerable segments of the population and/or reducing poverty by bolstering their productive potential. However, the current economic crisis poses new challenges with respect to the sustainable inclusion of beneficiaries, especially those most affected by the crisis, in order to avoid cycles of intergenerational reproduction of poverty and inequalities.

During the IV REMDES it was agreed to "strengthen programs and initiatives that enhance and complement the impact of social protection policies (...)"^{39/} Following up on this commitment, the debate among the participating authorities will focus on sharing experiences, best practices, and lessons learned in the design and implementation of initiatives, in national and/or local social programs, to promote productive inclusion and formal labor relations. The challenges of effectively linking cash transfer programs with income generation programs will also be addressed, by discussing strategies to continue empowering the beneficiaries of social programs so that they can develop alternative sources of income to enhance their economic autonomy. In this regard, it will be vital that the authorities' interventions consider aspects related to gender, racial, or ethnic inequalities, as well as the part that can be played by hemispheric cooperation to provide more effective support to Ministries of Social Development in this area.

7. Moving towards caring societies: challenges and lessons learned from comprehensive care systems in the region

As mentioned above, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a particular and specific impact on women's lives, exacerbating pre-existing inequalities and entailing unacceptable setbacks with respect to previously acquired rights. Increased demand for care due to healthcare measures and the closure of care centers have had negative and possibly long-lasting effects on the overall participation of women in the labor force.

On the other hand, the pandemic has served to draw more attention to the health care crisis and broaden public debate on the subject. The provision of care was already in crisis prior to COVID-19 and one of the main obstacles to ensuring women's equal participation in the economy, as well as to achieving gender equality both within families and in society as a whole.^{40/}

38. ECLAC (2011) Inclusive Social Protection in Latin America: A Comprehensive, Rights-Based Approach Available at: <https://repository.eclac.org/handle/11362/2596?locale-attribute=es>

39. OAS, Inter-American Declaration of Priorities in Social Development, REMDES, 2019, Guatemala. Available at: <http://scm.oas.org/remdesiv/Documentos/CIDES00196S02.doc>

40. CIM-OAS, EuroSociAL (2021) COVID-19 in Women's Lives: The Global Care Emergency. Available at: <http://portal.oas.org/en/cim/docs/CuidadosCOVID19-EN.pdf>

Investing in care and promoting co-responsibility between the State, the family, the market, and the community constitutes substantial progress towards gender equality, while boosting economic activity, generating quality professional jobs as well as their formalization, promoting the transformation of traditional gender roles, strengthening families by distributing care in a more equitable manner, enabling the generation and application of standards and regulations for care to ensure its quality, and fostering a collective vision and responsibility for economic development and social cohesion. At the global level, the cost and payoffs of a timely return of women to the labor market have been estimated. The conclusion was that taking immediate action to enhance gender equality in the labor market would add US\$13 trillion (*billones*) to global GDP in 2030, and if no such action is taken it is estimated that global GDP growth could be US\$1 trillion lower in 2030.^{41/}

Given this context, it is hoped that the V REMDES will trigger a constructive dialogue for moving towards a "care society" in the Americas, capable of positioning care as a fundamental social investment and as part of the cross-cutting response to the crisis aimed at ensuring a sustainable and transformative recovery. To this end, there is a pressing need to move towards comprehensive care systems, bearing in mind the recent work undertaken by the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM-OAS), which has developed a "Model Law on Caregiving" in line with the one already adopted by the OAS member states entitled "Model Inter-American Law to Prevent, Punish, and Eradicate Violence against Women in Political Life" -, which will be an important tool for laying the foundations and consolidating the social protection matrix in our countries.

8. Strengthening international and regional cooperation as a key to promoting equity and sustainability of social protection systems

At this meeting, a follow-up report on the Guatemala 2019 Plan of Action and the actions implemented by the Working Groups operating during the 2019-2022 cycle will be presented; and a discussion will be promoted to lay the groundwork for the strengthening of the Inter-American Social Protection Network (RIPSO) as a reference cooperation mechanism to support the implementation of the 2022 Dominican Republic Plan of Action.

9. Election of officers of the Inter-American Committee on Social Development (CIDES) for the 2022-2025 term

Pursuant to Article 4 of the Rules of Procedure of the Inter-American Committees of CIDI, each inter-American committee of CIDI shall elect a chair and two vice chairs who shall serve for three years or until the next regular meeting of the Committee. Their terms of office shall commence on the date on which they are elected and shall last until the election of their successors. In the event that the Commission does not meet during that period, the elections may be held within the framework of the regular meetings of CIDI or the meeting of Ministers and/or High Authorities of the corresponding sector, provided that the agenda item is included in the agenda of the meeting. Election shall be secured by an affirmative vote of a majority of the member states.

41. CIM-OAS, EuroSociAL (2021) COVID-19 in women's lives: care as an investment. Available at: <https://www.oas.org/es/cim/docs/CuidadosCOVID19-EN-Corto.pdf>

10. Establishment of the CIDES Working Groups and election of their authorities

The CIDES Working Groups will be established, and their respective authorities will be elected.

11. Establishment of the date and venue of the Sixth Meeting of Ministers and High Authorities of Social Development (VI REMDES)

In accordance with CIDI's General Guidelines for Sectoral Processes at the Ministerial Level, member states interested in hosting the VI REMDES are invited to announce their intention to do so. Once the venue for the VI REMDES has been determined, the selected member state shall become a member of the Troika and will begin to be part of the ministerial cycle and the preparations for the meeting. The member state's commitment begins when it confirms its interest in hosting the meeting and ends when it concludes its responsibilities in the Troika.

The Troika is composed of the sectoral authorities of the member states hosting the previous, current, and future ministerial cycle (once the offer to host the next meeting has been announced). In the event that no host country is announced, the Troika will function with only two authorities, and the third will be added when CIDI is informed of its intention to serve as host country or, in the event that the ministerial meeting is held at the OAS Secretariat headquarters, when it is elected as chair of the ministerial meeting.

12. Consideration and approval of the draft Inter-American Declaration on Social Development Priorities and the draft Plan of Action of the Dominican Republic 2022

The Draft Inter-American Declaration of Priorities in the Area of Social Development and the Draft Plan of Action of the Dominican Republic will be considered and approved.

C. PURPOSES OF THE MEETING

1. To agree on measures to advance and consolidate resilient, inclusive, and sustainable social protection systems as a fundamental strategy to address persistent gaps and needs in the Americas, including those emerging as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. To identify and share actual experiences and innovations in public policy for social protection aimed at meeting the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as sound practices, initiatives, and instruments that proved useful in addressing the crisis, highlighting lessons learned and latent challenges in their design, formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.
3. To promote partnership commitments to hemispheric cooperation as a key mechanism to promote social development in the region.
4. To draw attention to the central role played by social development ministries in risk mitigation, impact containment, and crisis recovery and, hence, the need to strengthen

their institutional capacities to address short-, medium-, and long-term needs in a comprehensive and coordinated manner with effective, sustainable, and transparent public policy management models.

a. Questions to guide the ministerial dialogue:

Which areas represent the greatest gaps and challenges to be prioritized in the region in terms of social development? How can social protection contribute to risk management and emergency response? How to strengthen the public response to social protection needs during a health and economic crisis? Who are the key actors to involve in the construction of the social and fiscal covenants needed to ensure the resilience and sustainability of such systems? What strategies have proved most effective? What approaches have you found useful to address the specific needs of the hardest-hit segments of the population? What courses of action would need to be taken in that regard? How can international best practices be tailored to national circumstances? What are the lessons learned from the current health situation in terms of social development? What is/should be the role of international cooperation for social development in the Hemisphere? What experiences or opportunities for cooperation and technical support can member states provide? To what extent and how can the international community supplement and support resource mobilization and sustainable financing strategies for social protection?

D. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1. The broadening and consolidation of options facilitating the construction of social protection systems capable of adapting and responding to the overall needs of contemporary society in an effective, efficient, and sustainable manner.
2. The identification and sharing of experiences and best public policy practices with respect to the central themes of the meeting, with emphasis on the lessons learned from their formulation and implementation.
3. The expansion and consolidation of strategic alliances and cooperation initiatives to promote hemispheric social development.
4. The adoption of an "Inter-American Declaration of Priorities in Social Development" establishing key courses of action to promote social development in the region and a Plan of Action for its implementation ("Dominican Republic Plan of Action 2022").
5. The identification of a number of concrete proposals for strengthening the Inter-American Social Protection Network (RIPSO) as a reference cooperation mechanism to support the implementation of the 2022-2025 Plan of Action.

E. STRUCTURE OF THE MEETING

To facilitate the fulfillment of the objectives of the meeting, each of the topics proposed for dialogue will be addressed during plenary sessions. The sessions will begin with presentations by experts in the field – academics, representatives of international organizations, civil society

organizations, etc. – who will share their technical analysis of the issues, including regional trends and priorities in this area. Then, ministers from previously identified countries will share experiences of sound practices in the implementation of public policies, programs, or initiatives related to the topic addressed in the corresponding plenary session, identifying lessons learned, and implementation challenges they may have encountered. The countries' presentations will be followed by a dialogue during which ministers and high-level authorities will have the opportunity to exchange ideas, experiences, and perspectives on the topic under discussion.

They will focus on sharing valuable experiences and possible opportunities for international technical cooperation in the area, with a particular emphasis on post-COVID-19 recovery support.

In plenary sessions, participants are also expected to set the date and venue for the VI Ministerial Meeting and adopt the "Draft Inter-American Declaration on Social Development Priorities" containing the main political agreements reached at the meeting, as well as the "Draft 2022 Dominican Republic Plan of Action."