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Inter-American Council for Integral Development  
(CIDI)



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MINISTERS OF LABOR (IACML)**

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DRAFT DECLARATION OF BUENOS AIRES 2021

“BUILDING A MORE RESILIENT WORLD OF WORK WITH SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT, DECENT WORK, PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT, AND SOCIAL  
INCLUSION”

(Agreed upon at the Preparatory Meeting of the XXI IACML on July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021)

1. We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation participating in the XXI Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor (IACML) of the Organization of American States (OAS), met virtually on September 22, 23 and 24, 2021, to deepen democratic processes and to advance towards building a more resilient, inclusive, sustainable, and human-centered future of work for the Americas, with decent work for all, including full, productive, and freely chosen employment, considering the health, social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. We note, with great concern, that in addition to a regrettable loss of human life, the pandemic has caused a historic recession with high levels of unemployment and economic inactivity, considerable income losses, and increases in informality, inequality, and precariousness. It has also revealed shortcomings, structural weaknesses and large gaps within our societies.

3. We emphasize the importance of decent work for COVID-19 response and recovery, and affirm our strong commitment to protecting human rights and to advancing the four pillars of decent work: promoting employment, developing and enhancing social protection measures, promoting social dialog and tripartism; and respecting, promoting and realizing the fundamental principles and rights at work. We recall the objectives of achieving and maintaining social peace and social inclusion, the principles of regional solidarity and cooperation, emphasizing the importance of international documents, including the Charter of the Organization of American States; the Inter-American Democratic Charter; the Social Charter of the Americas; the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; the International Labor Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental

Principles and Rights at Work; the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization; Declaration of Panama of the 19th American Regional Meeting of the ILO, the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work; and the ILO Resolution on a global call to action for a human-centered recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable, and resilient.

4. We underscore our commitment to deepening democratic processes and to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a framework for designing and implementing human-centered public policies aimed at achieving social and economic equality as our countries recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. We emphasize Goal 8 regarding the promotion of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, recognizing that it is essential to combating inequality and eradicating poverty. In a similar vein and considering that the impact of the COVID-19 crisis was greater among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our societies, especially the youth, children, and older persons, as well as among women, observance of SDGs 5, 10 and 1 is essential as these goals promote gender equality, the reduction of inequality and the end of poverty, respectively.

5. We reaffirm our goal of strengthening the role of Ministries of Labor, institutionalized social dialogue, integration processes and regional cooperation based on solidarity and the search for consensus to address the changes that have arisen in the world of work. We express our commitment to develop needed labor skills; address and regulate the prominent use of new and existing forms of work, including telework, working from home, and working through digital platforms; promote the sustainability of social security; foster sustainable enterprises; and enhance regional integration and decent work in value chains.

6. Therefore, we adopt the following recommendations to serve as a frame of reference for developing labor and employment policies that aim to achieve social, economic and employment recovery, build resilience, and address the effects of the crisis through decent work, sustainable development, and social justice for all.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORLD OF WORK TO COVID-19 RECOVERY AND TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORE RESILIENT, SUSTAINABLE, JUST, AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

7. We commit to redouble our efforts to promote both employment and business recovery; fight informality, labor precarization, poverty, and inequality in all its dimensions; and serve populations that have been most affected by the crisis such as women, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, persons that work in the informal economy, older persons and persons belonging to racial and ethnic minorities in the face of pre-existing inequalities that have deepened as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

8. Thus, we will continue developing active policies and human-centered strategies aimed at promoting the creation and formalization of employment, reducing informality and labor precarization, and guided by the ideals of social justice, equity, full and productive employment and decent work, and sustainable development.

9. In coordination with relevant institutions, we will seek to strengthen our social protection systems, their soundness, fiscal solvency, sustainability and taking into account the principles of solidarity, progressive realization, social inclusion and non-discrimination in the world of work, and take steps towards: achieving universal, adequate and sustainable social protection.

10. We will redouble our efforts for an inclusive, sustainable, and resilient recovery, the promotion of enabling environments for entrepreneurship, and the creation and development of sustainable enterprises, providing special attention to the promotion of micro and small enterprises, cooperatives and social economy enterprises. We recognize the important contribution of the actors of the world of work in economic growth, poverty reduction, sustainable development, social inclusion, decent work, and employment formalization.

11. We will deepen regional cooperation and coordination among Ministries of Labor, the actors of the world of work and civil society organizations, to answer to the challenges brought about by the crisis and achieve recovery with full and productive employment and decent work for all.

12. We recognize that COVID-19 has disproportionately affected women. For this reason, we will place special emphasis on promoting policies that aim to achieve gender equality through women's labor force participation, achieving non-discrimination and the elimination of violence and harassment. We will focus on promoting co-responsibility and an equitable and fair distribution of household tasks and on developing and formalizing the care economy, as we work to achieve pay equity and promote equal opportunities in all labor spheres. In this regard, we celebrate efforts made by the IACML and the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL), in partnership with the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), to advance gender mainstreaming and institutionalization in our Ministries of Labor. We commit to continue promoting and deepening gender mainstreaming in labor and employment programs and policies, and ministerial structures.

13. We will strengthen national actions and international cooperation to achieve the objectives related to work, employment and development, well-being and social inclusion within the framework of the Program of Action for the Decade of the Americas for the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities considering the impact of the pandemic on this population and with a view to avoiding all multiple forms of discrimination along with interconnected social, economic, and other conditions, including those that may result in vulnerability and the deepening of inequality.

14. We reaffirm our commitment to formulate decent work policies aimed at the indigenous peoples of the Americas in order to address the inequalities increased by the COVID 19 crisis and the new demands of the world of work.

15. We reaffirm our commitment to achieve a greater incidence in the process of preparation for the IX Summit of the Americas, in order to adopt measures to build a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient work future of work.

BETTER COORDINATION OF ECONOMIC, EDUCATION, HEALTH AND LABOR POLICIES TO ADDRESS AND OVERCOME THE EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS AND ACHIEVE THE FUTURE OF WORK WE WANT

16. We will develop and implement labor policies that, together with education, health and macroeconomic policies, can help to achieve socio-economic and employment recovery, while

fostering decent work and sustainable enterprises, and encouraging social investment to achieve the inclusion in the labor market of the most vulnerable populations. We will promote investments in strategic sectors, those most affected by the crisis and those who have a strong potential to create decent work opportunities, working with other relevant ministries, where appropriate.

17. We acknowledge that, in facing the pandemic and safeguarding workers' and employers' health, we have worked more closely with Ministries of Health, and we commit to continue our efforts to strengthen our inter-institutional coordination. Within these efforts, we will work towards: updating guidance, protocols and regulations related to health emergencies; developing measures to promote mental health in the workplace; while promoting safety and health at work from a preventive approach, in accordance with the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines.

18. We will continue improving the interaction and coordination between labor, education and training. In this regard, we celebrate the dialogue and cooperation that we have sustained since the XVIII IACML with the Ministries of Education within the framework of the OAS, and we will continue to promote, through active public policies, the coordination between professional training and formal education systems placing special emphasis on: technical and professional training; lifelong learning and reskilling; harmonization between training supply and labor demand; greater access to connectivity and affordability of digital technologies; the development of foundational and transferable skills including digital and socio-emotional skills relevant to changes in the world of work; the development, in accordance with national circumstances of each member state, of national and regional qualification frameworks, and the promotion of entrepreneurship.

19. We will promote the adaptation, integration, and strengthening of our public employment services to respond to the challenges posed by the pandemic and to the requirements that the transformations of the world of work present to us. According to our national realities, we will continue working to expand employment services, particularly for those in situations of greater vulnerability, by providing them with relevant job guidance, support for job transition, and counseling programs.

20. We will advance strategies aimed at promoting youth employment; at reducing unemployment and precarious youth employment; at facilitating school-to-work transition and

providing technical and vocational education and training opportunities for this age group, especially for those who are in situation of greater vulnerability due to various intersectionalities, including young women, youth with disabilities, migrants, indigenous youth, as well as youth who are involuntarily not in employment, education or training.

#### INSTITUTIONALIZED SOCIAL DIALOGUE TO RECOVER FROM THE CRISIS AND SECURE A FUTURE OF WORK WITH SOCIAL JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

21. We recognize that social dialogue is now more important and urgent than ever in the search for consensus and solutions that allow for a sustainable economic recovery and aim to build a new and better world of work with social justice and sustainable development. We will promote, strengthen, and expand inclusive, open, transparent, and intergenerational social dialogue.

22. We consider that broad and participatory social dialogue is an important instrument to strengthen labor institutions and promote the effective realizations of fundamental principles and rights at work. It also constitutes a primary mechanism for generating trust between governments and social actors of the world of work; reaching fair, equitable, and lasting agreements; prevent and resolve conflicts; encourage responsible business conduct and strengthen sustainable enterprises. Therefore, we support and promote institutionalized social dialogue at both domestic and regional levels for building a new and better world of work.

#### STRENGTHENING MINISTRIES OF LABOR TO ADDRESS EMERGING CHANGES IN THE WORLD OF WORK AND THE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

23. We recognize the central role that Ministries of Labor play, jointly with the institutions in charge of education, health and economic policies, to address the effects of the crisis as well as the challenges and opportunities posed by the future of work. We will continue strengthening their institutional and human capacities, and we acknowledge that cooperation and exchange of knowledge and experiences, as well as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, are essential in this effort. For this reason, we will continue to strengthen and actively participate in the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL), as the IACML's cooperation arm.

24. We reaffirm our commitment to continue strengthening the role of our Ministries in reviewing, formulating, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating employment and labor public policies; as well as in enforcing labor laws and advancing effective observance of fundamental principles and rights at work. We also agree on the urgent need to strengthen labor inspection due to the increase in job precariousness and informality levels caused by the pandemic and the new forms of work.

25. We will analyze, with the contribution of tripartite social dialogue, the development, design, and implementation of appropriate regulations that address the opportunities and challenges of existing and new forms of work, such as work on digital platforms, telework, work from home, and alternating between the workplace and remote work. We will promote regional cooperation in this matter, as well as in other areas related to the future of work and sustainable enterprises.

26. We join in commemorating 2021 as the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor, and we will take measures aimed at eliminating child labor, as well as forced labor, and promote education and integrated social assistance policies, in order to achieve the social inclusion of children and adolescents.

27. We reaffirm that all migrants, regardless of their immigration status, should be accorded the full protection of human rights and the full observance of labor laws applicable to them, including the principles and labor rights embodied in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Thus, we commit to continue our efforts to achieve comprehensive labor migration policies.

**THEREFORE, WE RESOLVE:**

1. To implement a Plan of Action based on this Declaration and on the work of the XX Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor (IACML) and we commit to ensure the necessary resources, in keeping with the available resources of each country.

2. To establish two working groups to continue to pursue activities and actions that will contribute to the objectives and commitments of this Declaration, as follows:

- i. Working Group 1: Integrated public policies to address the COVID-19 crisis and achieve a human-centered, inclusive, sustainable and resilient recovery for a future of work with equity, social justice and decent work.
- ii. Working Group 2: Institutional strengthening of Ministries of Labor, and promoting institutionalized social dialogue to recover from the COVID-19 crisis and address emerging changes in the world of work.

3. To renew our commitment to, and support for, the work of the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL).

4. To acknowledge with gratitude the contributions made by the following international organizations and specialized organs of the Organization of American States (OAS) that work unremittingly with the IACML: the International Labor Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Inter-American Conference on Social Security (CISS), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank (WB), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the Organization for Cooperation and Economic Development (OECD), as well as the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), the Inter-American Commission on Education (CIE), and the Commission on Migration Affairs (CAM). Accordingly, we call for continued coordination, support and regional dialogue with those organizations.

5. To recognize the importance of the active participation, as well as their contributions, inputs and support for the advancement of the IACML from workers' and employers' organizations through the Trade Union Technical Advisory Council (COSATE) and the Business Technical Advisory Committee in Labor Matters (CEATAL). Therefore, we reiterate our commitment to continue to work closely with those organizations.



6. To thank and commend the Government of Barbados for its leadership and commitment in advancing inter-American dialogue on labor and employment as Chair of the XX IACML, and also the Governments of Ecuador, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Costa Rica and Canada which led the Working Groups of the XX IACML.

7. To thank the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States, as Technical Secretariat of the IACML, for its contribution and support in this important hemispheric process of political dialogue and consensus-building, as well as its coordination of the RIAL.

8. To organize the XXII IACML in 2024 in (country).