I. RECOMMENDATIONS OF YOUTH

It is a great honor to attend this 43rd General Assembly of the Organization of American States, representing the voice of young people, in particular, young entrepreneurs of the Americas participating in the Talent and Innovation Competition of the Americas – TIC Americas 2013. In its 7th Edition, the competition has further integrated, for the first time, representatives from the Caribbean at the Sub Regional Caribbean Innovation Challenge and the Youth Dialogue “The Future We Want.” As young people, we present our recommendations along with concrete actions, these actions represented as innovative entrepreneurial projects. As innovators, we trust that the best way to deliver this message in this forum is by providing examples of our beliefs and solutions.

In April of this year, young people from eleven Caribbean countries gathered in Barbados for the Youth Dialogue: The Future We Want, facilitated by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Young Americas Business Trust (YABT). Results from that Dialogue were brought to Antigua, Guatemala and were used as inputs for the Hemispheric Youth Dialogue held two days ago at the 7th Talent and Innovation Competition of the Americas, where 32 teams from 19 countries of the Americas were selected from over 2,000 entrees to present solutions, from the youth perspective, to economic, social and environmental challenges in our region. The main concerns that young people encountered while establishing entrepreneurial projects include the following findings, which we present today as recommendations in the hope that you take them into consideration to create programs and public policies aimed at improving the conditions for entrepreneurial and business creation:

- Simplify the process to register a company and intellectual property records, especially for young people extending into formal markets. Currently, it is expensive and bureaucratically complicated.

- Beyond start up programs, much-needed support and financing for youth-led businesses and initiatives need to be established.

- Establishing a ministry of entrepreneurship to promote it, because it gets diluted when included in other government branches.

- Generate opportunities for young people to develop their potential as innovative, creative, enthusiastic and professional leaders, and to be seen as partners for implementing economic, social and environmental actions.
Our support system and financial agencies need to think outside the box by recognizing that times are changing and young people should be included in their policy-making forums.

There is the need for governments and financial institutions to see our business ideas as feasible enough to create a social impact and to be convinced that it can work. The banking institutions do not have faith in young people to invest in us. Therefore, an intermediary body needs to assist in the process of making funding available to young people, as it is one of the major obstacles of young people getting into business. Grants should be given in installments so that entrepreneurs can work in a step by step milestone basis.

Our ideas, although different, are not new to the world and yet most people think that they are too farfetched to be successful. Government endorsements of youth innovation and creativity must be ongoing and not ad hoc.

There is not enough investment in the cultural industries, which makes the Caribbean unique. The Caribbean culture is not fully appreciated by many and there isn't enough emphasis being placed on culture and creativity. There should be an alternative for students besides being doctors and lawyers while being creative and innovative.

There is still not enough national-level emphasis on the young people of the Caribbean, therefore networking and collaboration is of vital importance.

Most of us have the educational qualifications, but when it comes to getting jobs, most of us do not have the work experience. We need detailed resources and statistics that are readily available to assist young people.

For us Caribbean youths there should be a forum to post the information so as to make the linkage for Caribbean youth businesses to connect with the world. There is a lack of communication between islands.

Transport and linkages between islands is seen as almost nonexistent. We should try to expand our connections internationally.

Governments, private sector and NGOs should implement workshops for financial institutions so that they can understand the importance of funding the young entrepreneurs of the region.

We need a structure or system whereby young people of the Caribbean are given the opportunity to establish their credit rating and as such be accountable for maintaining them. In that way, it will make it easier for us to conduct business with financial institutions across the region. As Ambassador John Beale, Permanent Representative of Barbados to the OAS, once said, "Credit is man's confidence in man".

And finally, Caribbean export is very important as we depend highly on foreign exchange to carry out real business in the Caribbean. We need to be able to reduce the bureaucracy and regulation (though important) as it relates to businesses exporting their products, which can truly help in the direct development of small island developing States. More importantly, the region must break the barriers hampering exportation.
II. RECOMMENDATIONS BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

A. FOR A COMPREHENSIVE POLICY AGAINST THE WORLD DRUG PROBLEM IN THE AMERICAS


- We consider, “That the problematic consumption of drugs is primarily a social-health issue, but also an economic issue, for which it is necessary to strengthen national health, employment, educational support and social inclusion systems, particularly in the areas of prevention, treatment and harm reduction, while performing at the same time an evaluation of those systems aimed at identifying the necessary actions to respond to the problematic consumption of drugs from a non-repressive approach in a human rights context. (suggestions to point 4 of the Draft Declaration of Antigua Guatemala)

- We believe that it is necessary to separate personal use and consumption of drugs, as well as all related activities, from the criminal and security fields. It is essential to establish objective criteria that characterize the destination of drugs for use and consumption so that security agencies do not place users in the criminal system for subjective reasons. People that use drugs should not be penalized or criminalized for their consumption. Only a clear separation between drug users and the illegal market will allow the efforts of security agencies to properly focus their attention. Furthermore, this measure will result in an initial unclogging of prisons and justice systems.

- We consider that civil society participation is of great importance since it can offer, depending on the case, experience and knowledge to develop and implement policies and programs to confront the worldwide drug problem. In this regard, the Member States should encourage the participation of different social actors and build their capacities so they can contribute to strengthening national strategies.

- At the same time, we recommend formalizing social participation mechanisms in the design of prevention, attention, treatment, and risk and harm reduction policies and programs. It is necessary to involve civil society organizations, such as civil associations, foundations, mutual associations, grass-roots organizations, networks and organizations of drug users, academia and drug users, among others.

- We are convinced that a complete and diverse array of public health responses should be incorporated. Attention to different situations of problematic drug consumption requires diverse responses, especially in contexts where such consumption is combined with extreme poverty and cross-cutting vulnerabilities. Special attention should be placed on the services of proximity, community intervention, as well as strategies to reduce risk and harm associated with the use of drugs, always taking into account the diverse contexts and local realities.

- The development of outpatient and community-level mechanisms that complement inpatient services in a comprehensive treatment network for problems related to the consumption of substances should be promoted and strengthened. At the same time, it is fundamental to ensure that attention services for users are based on scientific and empirical evidence and conform to ethical principles, in addition to sanctioning health services that are offered outside of legal norms and that do not respect human rights. The States should allocate sufficient resources to ensure the financing of these measures.
- Services should avoid discrimination and favor access to treatments that are proven effective. The State has the obligation to oversee the compliance, by the specialized services for drug users, of the criteria of availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of attention. States should also recognize the right of people that use drugs to enjoy the highest possible levels of health (article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights).

- The rights of people who use drugs to choose the moment and type of treatment services must be respected. They should not be obligated to initiate, suspend or accept a determined treatment. Informed consent must clearly communicate the alternatives and conditions of treatments. Attention should be based on the bioethical principle of the autonomy of individuals.

- In the case of children, special attention should be given so that public health and childhood policies guarantee their attention based on respect for the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. They should also look out for the well-being, protection and growth of adolescents and youth as independent people.

- Unrestricted access to health services should be facilitated for persons deprived of liberty that have problematic drug consumption. Access to these services should be given in equal conditions to that guaranteed to the rest of the community.

- In no case can one’s procedural situation be used as an argument to impede the start or continuation of treatment.

- It is necessary to strengthen State control mechanisms for services aimed at drug users. It is the responsibility of the State to guarantee the quality of treatments and respect for the dignity of the persons attended.

- It is necessary to implement a coordinated registration, supervision and control system of public and private services for drug users, in accordance with the standards and norms on the subject. This State responsibility should extend to all initiatives, even those that fall outside of an integrated network of services.

- Public health interventions should be framed on a continuum that distinguishes the types of use, from recreational to addiction and, as such, address a complete array of services and interventions that go from prevention to harm reduction and treatment.

- There should be a distinction between harm associated with drug abuse and harm associated with drug policy. It is imperative to remember that if all drug consumption is potentially risky, in some contexts where criminalization and punitive approaches to control the associated harms prevail, these policies can go beyond the harms caused directly by the improper use of substances.

- We suggest reevaluating the position of the Member States in terms of psychiatric drugs and the regulation of other legal drugs, such as alcohol, tobacco and inhalable drugs with special emphasis on protecting children, adolescents and youth. In this sense, it is necessary to prioritize public action, recognizing that the need for intervention is currently concentrated on reducing harm associated with the abuse of these substances.
2. **Challenges to Public Security and the Development of a Comprehensive Policy against the World Drug Problem in the Americas**

Concerned because the implementation of policy enacted to date to address the drug problem in the Hemisphere has exacerbated violence, weakened the rule of law, and violated human rights and democratic institutions, we make the following recommendations:

- That States formulate public policies that confront the drug problem in any stage of the production and sales chain, and which foster citizen security and are respectful of human rights and the environment.

- Strengthen the exchange of information between States that share common borders in order to detect illegal trafficking and decrease vulnerability.

- Reestablish the presence of the State in border and socioeconomically deprived zones with a focus on inclusion and development as opposed to national security. Strengthen the role of and collaboration with local governments and civil society.

- Establish a participatory periodic review process with civil society of those policies designed to address the problems inherent to and derived from the production, trafficking, sales and consumption of drugs, as well as money laundering.

- We urge the States to implement a periodic mechanism for multilateral and multi-sectoral follow-up and evaluation at the hemispheric level, similar to the Follow-up Mechanism for the Implementation of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption (MESICIC).

- Recognize that the problems inherent to and derived from the production, trafficking and sale of drugs are the domain of citizen security and environmental protection and not national defense.

- Provide the police forces of the hemisphere with the adequate technical, financial, training and human resources to confront the problems inherent to and derived from the production, trafficking, sales and consumption of drugs, as well as money laundering.

- Adopt and/or strengthen effective control measures to prevent the diversion, manufacture, and trafficking of illicit firearms and munitions to criminal groups and the general population.

- Urge the States that have not already done so, to ratify the CIFTA and other instruments related to arms and munitions, such as the Arms Trade Treaty that were recently available for signature. Similarly, we urge the States Parties of the CIFTA and other related conventions and declarations to immediately take urgent measures for their implementation, taking into consideration national, bilateral and regional measures.

- Strengthen the States’ capacities for the tracking, investigation, registration, and criminal prosecution of illegal trafficking in firearms and munitions.

- Urge States to adopt a mutually responsible policy to regulate the trade of firearms and munitions to other countries of the region.

- Review and update the 2010 Hemispheric Drug Strategy through a participatory process.

- It is necessary, in order to realize a reduction in the violence generated by current drug policies, for governments to ensure the just proportionality of penalties that distinguish between drug trafficking and other types of offenses; minor-, medium- and high-level drug offenses; the rank and position that a person holds in drug trafficking networks; violent and non-violent crimes; and types of drugs.

- Urge the establishment of and increase in alternatives to imprisonment for those accused of minor, non-violent drug offenses, and that humanitarian concerns are taken into account in order to be able to confront the devastating impact that disproportionality has on vulnerable populations, including single mothers, youth, and the poorest of the poor. This goes along with the need to end the excessive use of preventive detention, overcrowding, overpopulation, and inhumane conditions. This must be linked to alternatives to incarceration for adults and alternative penalties for youth, excluding in both cases the use of Drug Courts.

- Reiterate that the States comply thoroughly with their obligation to guarantee access to justice for all people according to the standards established by the organs of the Inter-American Human Rights System.

- The above specifically implies that, at any moment, consumption should be separated from the criminal field. Having said this, under no circumstance can a consumer, for this act alone or for the practice of any act leading to consumption, end up in prison or be a victim of processes such as preventive detention. To the contrary, it is necessary to ensure that consumers of drugs are never denied access to health, democratic participation, education, housing, or other basic guarantees, even when legal precedents may exist.

- All changes in drug policies, current as well as future, under no circumstance should cause or represent setbacks in democracy and respect for human rights. Likewise and for example, these changes or reforms should respect the conventions and declarations on human rights. This falls under the framework in which there exists complete openness to explore less militarized alternatives.

- Adjust and broaden private political financing regulations in order to impede and punish tax havens and the entry of illegal monies to campaigns and public administration.

- Address a transparent and monitored solution with respect to the chain of custody of drugs, i.e. money and goods confiscated from drug trafficking. These funds should be invested in prevention and rehabilitation programs.

- Favor the experimentation of normative drug regulation models, beginning with cannabis since the persecution of users and the cannabis market has proven ineffective, costly, and counterproductive. The Member States should learn from the best practices and apply methods of production regulation in order to remove the monopolies that criminal organizations currently have in these markets, and their serious effects of violence, corruption and on the health of the users.

- Reiterate the importance of civil society participation in these processes, since they can offer, depending on the case, experience and knowledge for the development and implementation of policies and programs related to drugs. In that regard, the Member States should encourage a
wide and open debate so that all sectors of society are informed of the various aspects of the phenomenon and in this way contribute to the strengthening of national strategies.

- The proliferation of organized crime linked to drug trafficking is a reflection of social exclusion, the rule of law and democracy, which leads to the loss of futures and collective projects and makes it necessary for States to develop public policies that advance these issues, which are coupled with violence and delinquency and attack vulnerable groups, especially the youth. That is why the central role of comprehensive education and a culture of work is fundamental to generate decent work and rights.

- The application of the United Nations conventions on drugs should be subject to the respect for the standards established in the international human rights protection system. At the domestic level, we urge the States to develop legislative reform proposals that incorporate the criteria proposed in this statement.

- We urge the States to incorporate an integral approach to alternative development programs against cultivation for illicit use that is sensitive to the contexts of poverty, social exclusion and State abandonment in which many farmers live.

- Include in paragraph 21 of the Draft Declaration of Antigua, Guatemala “For a Comprehensive Drug Policy against the World Drug Problem in the Americas”: Recognize the traditional uses of ancestral plants such as the coca leaf. Certain countries in Latin America include the chewing, and other uses of the coca leaf, as an ancestral practice of their populations. The recognition of these uses, and the impetus it provides to the diverse markets for the coca leaf should be respected, protected and encouraged. The potential therapeutic uses should be investigated.

B. PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

1. Policies for the Fight against Drugs and Human Rights

- We emphasize that all comprehensive policy related to drugs should be separate from a security and militarization perspective, guaranteeing the unrestricted respect for human rights of all persons and their consideration from a public and human health perspective, as well as addressing prevention and attention to psychosocial health.

- We recognize that policies implemented to date have had different impacts on certain groups, placing them in a vulnerable situation. In particular, this impact is manifested in distinct forms of violence against women, in the criminalization of indigenous peoples and social and environmental protests, attacks, threats and assassinations that threaten human rights defenders, journalists and social communicators, sex workers and members of the LGBTI community.

- We affirm that in all policies, programs and strategies that are adopted in relation to the fight against, decriminalization and legalization of drugs, the supreme interest of children should be considered in the context of the commitments assumed by the States to guarantee the fulfillment and observance of their rights.

- We recall that the protection of adolescents and youth must be guaranteed in those policies, preventing their criminalization and considering the imposition of alternative sentences and the implementation of social justice programs that allow them to develop a full life path.
We urge the States to recognize the importance of a focus on human rights, social justice, promotion of peace and a gender perspective in strategies to address the drug problem.

We highlight the importance of regulating and limiting the possession of arms in the population and preventing militarization in matters of citizen security.

We urge the substitution of the war against drugs paradigm and the revision of the prohibitionist model.

Similarly, we consider the importance of investing in health resources, non-forced internment, and policies to reform security forces and effective policies for arms control.

We demand that addiction be treated as a psychosocial disability and, therefore, as a human right and not as a security, moral or public welfare policy.

We urge the States to commit to real financing of social inclusion programs for adolescents and youth that include addiction treatment as an issue of public health.

We underscore the need to link the relationship between narcotrafficking and networks of human trafficking and exploitation.

We insist in the need to pay attention to the management of territory and protected areas. Narcotrafficking has promoted invasions in communities, and purchasing land at a low cost with the concomitant increase in displacement.

2. Protection Mechanisms and the Inter-American Human Rights System (IAHRS)

We reaffirm the validity and importance of the IAHRS, especially considering the weak institutions in many of our countries.

We highlight the need to respect the autonomy and independence of the IAHRS, and especially the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), as an autonomous organ of the OAS.

We demand the States to cede to the IAHRS the opportunity to implement reforms to its rules of procedure, policies and practices that it undertook as a consequence of the process of reforms in which we were involved during the past two years. And in this sense, we underscore that the process to reflect on the workings of the IACHR concluded with the Special General Assembly on March 22, 2013. In this sense, the States should abstain from reopening reform processes and, in particular, prevent those processes from being carried out in spaces where civil society participation is not guaranteed.

We demand that the States comply with the comprehensive financial commitments of the IAHRS, which is essential for the success of the reforms already adopted by the IACHR.

We reiterate the importance that all of the OAS Member States ratify all of the international human rights instruments, and for those that have denounced said instruments to reconsider their decision.
• We demand that the States fully comply with the decisions of the IAHRS and that the oversight mechanisms for their application be strengthened both at the national and inter-American levels.

• In order to strengthen technical quality and independence of the IAHRS, it is important to establish transparent and participatory systems in the selection of candidates for the organs of the IAHRS.

• Bearing in mind that the election of three members of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights will be held during the present General Assembly, we call the States’ attention to the importance of this election and the need to elect the candidates that most fully comply with the suitability and moral authority, which means prioritizing the personal qualities of the candidates in the election and not the political negotiation among the States.

• We underscore the importance of the work of the Special Rapporteurship on Freedom of Expression and, in accordance with the resolution of the recent Special General Assembly, we call for all rapporteurships to be strengthened and that their equality not result in diminishing the resources of the already existing rapporteurships.

• We urge the States to cooperate with the IACHR and, in particular, to invite and cooperate with the Commission in conducting on site visits.

• That the States recognize the work of human rights defenders and especially their work before the IAHRS, as well as the need to protect their life and labor without stigmatizing them because of their work. In particular, the States should fully comply with the precautionary measures dictated by the IACHR.

• We reiterate the importance of maintaining spaces for civil society participation in the OAS, and in this sense we request that the integrity of those spaces be respected, preventing State representatives from interfering in them and affronting those who express different points of view.

3. **Fight against impunity**

• We underline the debt that still exists in good part of our region with justice, the truth and the reparation of grave human rights violations, including crimes against humanity, genocide and forced disappearance. In this sense, we recall and reaffirm that amnesty and other forms to excuse one of responsibility are prohibited by international law in relation to those crimes and represent an obstacle for democracy and the equality of people.

• Millions of citizens of the region have suffered violence. We stand united with the victims and their families. We express our support to the Ixil community and the victims of human rights violations in Guatemala and other countries of the region.

• We recall that grave human rights violations are not an issue of the past, but rather they perpetuate in our region.

• We reiterate that, in accordance with international law, civilian justice and not military justice should be that which judges cases of grave human rights violations.
We denounce the criminalization, prosecution and stigmatization of human rights defenders for their legitimate activity. We reject inciting violence by state and non-state actors for political, religious, ethnic and other reasons.

Moreover, we denounce violence against journalists and social communicators in the region.

We reject the stigmatization suffered by indigenous peoples, as well as environmentalists against cases of megaprojects.

We reiterate the importance of guaranteeing access to justice of all persons and guaranteeing judicial independence in our countries.

We reject violence suffered by the youth in many of our countries as a result of the gangs phenomenon.

C. RIGHTS OF THE AFRO-DESCENDANT POPULATION

Gathered in Antigua on June 2 and 3, 2013, 42 representatives of Afro-descendant organizations from Latin America and the Caribbean, participated in the event “Participation and Influence by Afro-descendants in the OAS General Assembly “For a Comprehensive Policy against the World Drug Problem in the Americas,” hosted by Global Rights – Partners for Justice.

Considering that the States of the Americas declared combating racism and racial discrimination, based on the Declaration and Plan of Action of Santiago Chile in 2000, in preparation for the World Conference against Racism that took place in Durban, South Africa in 2001.

Dismayed by the human rights situation of the communities of Afro-descendants, indigenous peoples, migrants, roma, persons with disabilities, refugees, the stateless, children, persons living with HIV/AIDS, religious minorities, in the areas of economic, social and cultural rights, as well as in civil and political rights.

Recalling the commitment of the States of the hemisphere, since the Declaration and Plan of Action of Mar del Plata to combat racism, racial discrimination and intolerance in our societies.

Concerned about the gap in equality, development, worsening poverty, growing misery, racism, racial discrimination, homophobia and transphobia, and the lack of opportunities for Afro-descendants.

Dismayed by the impact of narcotrafficking, increasing the risks and vulnerability of groups established in our territories, the majority of which are Afro-descendant communities settled in coastal lands and areas with high migration flows.

Considering that the scourge of drugs is a social, political, economic and cultural problem that assumes different characteristics for women, adolescents, children, and LGBTI persons, causing disintegration, generating strong expressions of violence, the loss of ancestral values and cultures of Afro-descendant families.

Worried about the systematic violence that affects the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) population among Afro-descendants in the Americas, where discrimination and homophobic and transphobic actions are multiplied, generating greater obstacles to access and the full enjoyment of their rights in our hemisphere.
Alarmed by the institutional absence of States in Afro descendent territories and, as a consequence, the vulnerability of our territory and its population, placing the life and culture of our communities at risk.

Recognizing the effort made by the Working Group of the draft resolution CP/CAJP-3168/13 “Inter-American Convention against Racism, Racial Discrimination, and Related Forms of Intolerance” and the draft resolution CP/CAJP-3167/13 “Inter-American Convention against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance” that will be presented for approval in this General Assembly.

Recalling that the Member States, in different General Assembly resolutions, have committed to strengthening civil society participation in the Summits of the Americas process.

Congratulating the draft resolution recognizing and promoting the rights of people of African descent in the Americas, where States are urged to facilitate the participation of organizations representing people of African descent in the hemisphere as political and social actors in the Summits of the Americas process.

Concerned about the increasing insecurity, narcotrafficking and consumption of drugs that affect mainly Afro descendent youth, which represent the largest prison population in many countries.

Committed to actively contributing to strengthening the work of the Organization of American States (OAS) in the fight against racism and racial discrimination and intolerance in the hemisphere.

Conscious that the Member States are the ones that participate in the discussion and approval process of the draft Declaration of Antigua, presented by Guatemala, we wish to make the following recommendations:

- That the Member States approve the draft resolutions CP/CAJP-3168/13 “Inter-American Convention against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance” and CP/CAJP-3167/13 “Inter-American Convention against all Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance,” which will be presented for approval in this General Assembly.

- That the Member States assume the commitment to effectively support the work of the Rapporteurship on the Rights of Afro-Descendants and against Racial Discrimination of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

- That the States, in cooperation with organized civil society, should design, encourage and implement with greater speed public policies, programs, plans and projects with a differentiated approach, allowing for the adoption of affirmative actions to confront narcotrafficking, delinquency, marginalization, exclusion and other negative consequences that our communities live, as well as the defense of and access to ancestral territories.

- We urge the States Parties to take urgent and immediate measures to reverse the situation of vulnerability in which women, adolescents, children and persons with special abilities of Afro descendent communities and peoples live.

- That the OAS attend and recognize the intersections that embody some LGBTI persons in our countries, urging the States to formulate public policies focused not only on their sexual identity and orientation, but also on their ethnic and racial identity, allowing them to identify and dissuade actions and practices that restrict or violate dignity and human rights of these persons in Afro descendent territories in the Americas.
- That the Member States drive and strengthen actions that promote development with cultural identity and responsibility of the Afro-descendant and indigenous populations.

- We urge the Member States to promote a draft inter-American convention on sexual and reproductive rights.

D. RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

In the framework of the XLIII OAS General Assembly that is convoked under the theme “For a Comprehensive Policy against the World Drug Problem in the Americas”, the organizations participating in the project “Promoting knowledge and awareness about the legal capacity of persons with disabilities in Latin America” propose that it is necessary to observe the intrinsic relation that exists between the problem of drug consumption and the situation of persons with psychosocial disabilities. More so, considering that the OAS Secretary General, Mr. Jose Miguel Insulza, recognized on June 3 in the dialogue with civil society that the Decade of the Americas 2006-2016 for persons with disabilities and the Inter-American Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities, have not been fulfilled and it is necessary to urgently reverse this situation.

Based on the contents of Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), it is key to highlight that there is still no definition from international human rights organizations on psychosocial disability. However, we believe it is necessary to clearly state the significance of this problem to be able to provide visibility to persons that live in this situation.

Psychosocial disability results from the interaction of a person with a condition (such as depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and addictions, among others) that is occasional or permanent, and the societal barriers or demands that can sometimes limit and compromise their full participation under equal conditions with others. In this sense, a person with a psychosocial disability is not considered a sick person, but rather a complete person, as is.

Among which persons with disabilities—historically invisible—were not mentioned, the groups most affected by the consumption and trafficking of drugs are those that are found in situations of greater vulnerability, social exclusion, violence, discrimination, abuse of their human rights, among others. The response to date has been repression and individual punishment, isolation and institutionalization without contemplating the deeply-rooted social causes in the exclusion, stigmatization, lack of information and situation of poverty, among others. Today, we find the main challenge is the need to reform treatment and prevention policies so as to be more inclusive and accessible for persons with disabilities in general and in particular for persons with psychosocial disabilities.

1. Situation of persons with psychosocial disabilities: Shadows and hopes

Persons with disabilities face different forms of discrimination and social exclusion daily as a product of the underestimation prevalent in our societies.

The great majority of persons with disabilities that live in the countries of the Latin American region, face hard and historical conditions of poverty and extreme poverty that, in general, do not allow for advances in their human and social development, in accordance with their potential, their dignity and rights as persons.
As a consequence of the stigmatization and prejudices that provoke their human diversity, persons with psychosocial disabilities as well as other types of disability (such as intellectual and multiple disabilities) have been and are victims of grave, repeated and systematic violations of their civil and political rights, in addition to their economic, social and cultural rights.

Invisibility has been and is part of life for the great majority of persons with psychosocial disabilities. It is a cause and consequence of the cancellation of the enjoyment, benefit and exercise of their human rights, as it relates to the declaration of interdiction, disqualification and disability that forms part of the civil codes of the countries of the region. Upon enforcing this norm, they are sentenced to a sort of “civil death,” with which they cease to be recognized as persons and as citizens before the law.

In the large majority of cases, persons with psychosocial disabilities have not been self-represented through their own organizations, nor have they been the protagonists in their struggles and vindications. Intermediate organizations of family members and professionals have occupied that space and that should now cede it to the persons with psychosocial disabilities, supporting them constructively as allies.

Nowadays, many persons with disabilities, particularly persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities, are submitted to situations of forced internment, isolation, abandonment, mistreatment, torture, overmedication and experimentation with medications, among other forms of abuse, that are justified as means of care and protection, which in practice drastically cut their autonomy, freedom and dignity, and deeply affect their lives, thus making the exercise of their right to denounce and defend themselves against such abuses impossible.

Against this devastating situation of lives and people, the CRPD has emerged, which represents a very valuable and hopeful step forward and change since this international legally-binding instrument for the States Parties can and should constitute a valuable instrument to generate inclusive and cross-cutting public policies that favor the living conditions of persons with disabilities; even more so because practically all States of the Latin American region have already ratified this Convention.

For all persons with disabilities that are submitted to processes of interdiction, disqualification or disability, and/or that today suffer from different forms of institutionalization and abuses, the effective application of article 12 of the UN Treaty, as well as other norms included in other articles of the Convention, constitute a glimmer of hope to improve their living conditions, provided that the States (in all their branches: legislative, executive and judicial) effectively enforce the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as the highest law, in a creative and sustained way, daily and harmonize national legislation with the elements of the mentioned Convention.

2. **Recommendations for the necessary change**

In virtue of the previously-mentioned observations and justifications, the participants of this international forum recommend the following to the States of the Latin American region and those that are part of the Organization of American States (OAS):

The States of the Americas that have already ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities should harmonize all of their legislation in accordance with that established in article twelve of the UN Convention so that the model of substituting persons with disabilities is no longer implemented in favor of the model in which persons with disabilities
are the decision makers, with the strictly required and defined support of a competent judicial authority, and/or elected by the same person with disabilities.

It is necessary for the States to implement public policies and actions that ensure the dignity of and respect for the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities, eradicating all forms of stigmatization, discrimination and abuses, such as forced internment, isolation, abandonment, mistreatment, torture, overmedication and experimentation with medications, as well as alternatives to attention and outpatient services based in the same community and equal and dignified access to treatment and medications required for an independent life in the community.

Similarly, we propose the need for the States to design policies and actions oriented toward the social inclusion of persons with psychosocial disabilities, through the opening of quality educational and technical training opportunities, dependent and self-employment and social services, which lend support to those that are unable to work.

Pursuant to article 8 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, States are required to conduct public campaigns aimed at providing visibility for persons with disabilities as subjects of law, promoting awareness in society about the rights of persons with disabilities and, in particular, the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities, emphasizing the eradication of the social stigma that affects these people.

It is also necessary for the OAS and its Member States to harmonize the Inter-American Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Guatemala 1999) with the United Nations Treaty, in particular with respect to the elements on legal capacity included in article 12 of the CRPD, on which the Inter-American Convention is in clear contradiction. This modification agrees with article XI of the Inter-American Convention that contemplates the competence of the States Parties to propose amendments.

The States should promote full recognition and visibility of persons with psychosocial disabilities as part of the collective of persons with disabilities in inclusive and cross-cutting public policies and programs.

It is essential for psychosocial disabilities to be recognized when describing those persons protected by the international treaty, following the tone of article 1 of the CRPD, in all of the countries that make up the OAS and, consequently, persons with psychosocial disabilities and OPcD PS should be duly heard and be able to participate in the development of public policies, with a rights-based approach that beyond psychiatric diagnosis and the prevailing medical model.

Nothing about persons with disabilities, without persons with psychosocial disabilities!

E. RIGHTS OF LESBIANS, GAYS, BISEXUALES, TRANSVESTITES, TRANSEXUALS, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX OF THE AMERICAS

The organizations of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transvestites, transsexuals, transgender and intersex, here forward referred to as LGBTTTI, meeting in Guatemala City on May 31 to June 2, 2013, in accordance with the guidelines established by the OAS General Assembly in resolutions AG/RES.2092(XXXV-O/05); CP/RES.759(1217/99); AG/RES.840(1361/03) through resolutions AG/RES.1707(XXX-O/00) and AG/RES.1915(XXXIII-O/03) that determine a normative framework to increase and strengthen civil society participation in the OAS and the Summits of the Americas process, express that:
The policies of repression and criminalization for the possession of drugs for personal consumption have been the cause of human rights violations of vulnerable groups. The decriminalization and a differentiated look at this reality will diminish discrimination, achieving processes for social inclusion and democratic guarantees for LGBTTTI persons, as well as Afro-descendants, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

In the countries of Central America, organized crime groups are not controlled by the police or any other State body, which strengthens citizen insecurity.

In this context, discrimination due to sexual orientation and gender identity has increased with acts of verbal and physical violence, torture, cruel and inhumane treatment, forced disappearances and homicides as an extreme expression of violence.

The trans populations are one of the groups that most suffer from these acts of aggression. They are also denied their right to health, education and work, in sum, to their dignity. The non-existence of a document that recognizes the gender identity that trans persons have adopted and constructed, or placing conditions on their receiving vexatious medical practices constitutes an insurmountable limitation to accessing those rights.

Low self-esteem in women lesbians, provoked by a patriarchal system that ignores and stigmatizes them, makes them vulnerable to problems related to their mental health, addictions and family violence, causing psychosocial disability. It also limits their access to comprehensive medical attention. The same system in the English-speaking Caribbean leads LGBTI youth to live in the streets and heterosexual youth to underperform in school.

Eleven countries of the Caribbean (one-third of the States of the Americas) maintain laws that criminalize and prohibit consensual sexual relations between persons of the same sex; wearing clothing of the opposite sex “with improper purposes,” as well as the entry of foreigners due to their homosexuality. Some of those governments have recently promulgated or reinforced those laws, while others deliberately exclude LGBTI persons from all protection against discrimination.

In this subregion, access to justice and human rights protection mechanisms are weak, constitutional protection excludes sexuality, access to supranational mechanisms for the defense of human rights is limited and some governments of the Caribbean have declared that the human rights protection of sexual minorities requires a “political mandate” from the majority.

Nevertheless, in this context we express our satisfaction to the Member States for the conclusion of the negotiation process of the draft Inter-American Convention against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance and the Inter-American Convention against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance, and we thank the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda for its leadership role.

Based on the above, we demand the Member States:

- To sign, ratify and execute the Inter-American Convention against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance, as well as the Inter-American Convention against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance.
- To adopt legislation and public policies in accordance with the commitments assumed in the resolutions “Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity,” approved by previous General Assemblies.

- To create and strengthen the national human rights institutions and implement educational programs to develop a culture of human rights and pluralistic society.

- To adopt measures that ensure access to justice and guarantee the due process of persons without discrimination due to sexual orientation and gender identity.

- To adopt comprehensive health strategies and specify LGBTI populations. With particular emphasis on the different needs of trans persons.

- To review the legislative framework, abolishing laws that criminalize sexual relations between same-sex persons.

- To adopt laws that recognize the gender identity of trans persons.

- To promote the direct participation of LGBTI persons and civil society groups in dialogues, consultations, the definition and planning of policies at the national and local levels.

- To consider the proposal of an Inter-American Convention on Sexual Rights and Reproductive Rights.

- To adopt inter-American instruments on human rights.

That the General Assembly:

- Approve the draft resolution “Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression,” presented by the delegation of Brazil, whose initiative we thank.

- Approve the draft resolution “Inter-American Convention against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance.”

- Approve the draft resolution “Inter-American Convention against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance.”

F. SEXUAL RIGHTS AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Organizations of women, youth, trans, LGBTTI, Afro-descendants, sex workers, older persons, persons with different disabilities, migrants, intercultural, feminists, persons living with HIV—The Campaign—participate in the 43rd OAS General Assembly, held in Antigua, Guatemala on June 4-6, 2013, with the objective to urge the States to make decisions related to the promotion and implementation of comprehensive public policies that observe the impact that the production, trade, criminalization and narcotrafficking have on the guarantee and respect for sexual and reproductive rights, especially of women, Afro-descendant women, indigenous women, children, lesbian women and trans women.

We demand that those public policies of the 34 Member States of the OAS consider common problems for all and that decisions are made in reference to:
- Dismantling criminal production, trade and trafficking networks of illicit drugs and the direct link these networks have with the trafficking of persons, especially women, children, sexual slavery and other crimes against sexual rights and reproductive rights.

- Structural measures to eradicate the feminization of poverty that places women in a greater situation of vulnerability to be manipulated and utilized for networks of trafficking and micro-trafficking of illicit drugs.

- Eradicating impunity associated with crimes committed inside detoxification clinics, especially related to sexual violence.

- Guaranteeing sexual rights and reproductive rights of women and lesbians through differentiated policies and programs that reflect their specific needs of sexual diversity and gender identity.

- Guaranteeing the sexual rights and reproductive rights of women sex workers that defend their activities as work, and therefore, recognize their rights as such, including the decriminalization of this activity.

- No single concept of a family exists, as shown by human rights entities of the international and inter-American systems, when one of them determines that the family nucleus can be constituted by persons of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities and the children they may have. These should be subject to the protection of the State and society, under penalty of violating articles 11.2 and 17.1 of the American Convention on Human Rights.

- The decriminalization of abortion under all circumstances and the implementation of legislation that favors the freedom to choose as a right of women over their bodies and lives, as it was recommended to the States by diverse committees of the international and inter-American systems.

In addition, we consider that the discussion on the topic of drugs can not be disconnected from the unrestricted fulfillment of human rights of all persons and, in this sense, we claim that sexual rights and reproductive rights are human rights.

Therefore, we urge the Member States to:

- Ratify the Inter-American Convention against all Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance.

- Ratify the resolution that approves the Inter-American Convention against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance.

- Schedule the approval of a resolution for an inter-American convention on sexual rights and reproductive rights.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS BY WORKERS ORGANIZATIONS

The labor movement in the Americas, represented by its continental organization, the Trade Union Confederation of Workers of the Americas (TUCA) and the Trade Union Technical Advisory Council (COSATE), met in Antigua, Guatemala on June 3, 2013 in order to consolidate a set of ideas and recommendations on the theme, “For a Comprehensive Policy against the World Drug Problem in the Americas,” to be submitted to the authorities of the Member States of the Organization of American States that will meet in Assembly on the 4th, 5th and 6th days of this month in this city.
A. Peace, Human Rights, Democracy and the Development of a Comprehensive Drug Policy

It is clear to us the urgency to acknowledge the theme and the responsibility of the States in preventing the drug problem and narco activity, which most significantly affect the poorest and the workers of the Americas. We believe that the main cause of the violence, systematic violations of human rights and uncertainties associated with the issue of drugs in the Americas is related primarily to the applicability and enforcement of 30 years of neoliberal policies which have resulted in the dismantling of States and policies of social exclusion. A weak State, unable to generate sustainable development and decent work, creates poverty, unemployment and insecurity, which are the main causes of crime and increased citizen insecurity. We affirm that social inequality is the main driver of citizen insecurity. Socio-economic, territorial, demographic, gender and generational inequality have contributed significantly to an increase in raids and in security.

In addition to this, the policy option taken by some States of insisting on a failed War on Drugs has resulted in the deaths of thousands of workers and justified an undesirable process of militarization in many countries in our region.

We believe that drug abuse is a social and health problem, so it is necessary to strengthen national health systems, support for education and social inclusion, particularly in the areas of prevention, treatment and harm reduction, and to jointly develop an evaluation of such systems that allows us to identify the actions needed to address problematic drug consumption from a non-repressive approach in the context of human rights.

As a way to overcome the multiple crises and consequences of the long period of neoliberalism, we propose the need to promote sustainable development to promote productive development in harmony with the environment, and to place decent work as an engine of this development. There is an urgent need to develop comprehensive public policies that promote employment with rights, education, and health, ultimately promoting a society with equal opportunities and rights for all.

Thus we see that:

- The proliferation of organized crime linked to drug trafficking is a reflection of social exclusion, which leads to the loss of horizons and collective projects. This makes it necessary for States to develop public policies in response, and brings with it violence and crime targeting vulnerable groups, especially young people. Therefore, the centrality of comprehensive education and a work culture which creates decent work with rights is essential;

- States should fully comply with their obligations to ensure access to justice for all people according to internationally established standards;

- States should create public policies to address the drug problem at all stages of the production and marketing chain, generating citizen security and respect for human rights;

- It is crucial to recognize that the particular problems and side effects of the production, trafficking and sale of drugs belong in the sphere of citizen security and not in that of national defense; and

- A participatory process of periodic review with civil society on policies designed to deal with inherent and related problems associated with the production, trafficking, sale and consumption of drugs and with money laundering, should be established.
The insecurity from which peoples of the region suffer has expanded to such an extent that it will take time and sustained effort to obtain the desired results. Multiple complex and interconnected factors indicate that actions that tend to contribute to the demise of this scourge will have to be systematic and intersectoral, and become a permanent part of State policy with wide participation of social actors.

B. Comprehensive Policy on Drugs, Citizen Insecurity and Anti-Union Violence

There is evidence of many cases of violence against trade union leaders and their organizations in various countries in the Americas. In Guatemala more than 56 trade unionists were killed in the last three years alone; this is in addition to numerous acts of torture, kidnappings, raids and death threats that have created a culture of fear and violence.

The violation of the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining has been a constant in this period. The data give Guatemala the shameful title of most dangerous country in the world for trade unionists, according to the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

Given this scenario, the labor movement is keeping a close watch on the context of profound violence and, what is even worse, the impunity of crimes against workers in Guatemala. Of greatest concern is that of the 56 killings admitted by the Government in the last six years, only in two cases is it recognized that the crime was motivated by union activities. The other deaths are included among the so-called common crimes such as “extortion,” “personal differences” or “crimes of passion.”

We support social dialogue, but there is no time to waste. The international trade union movement and the families of the victims want these cases to be properly investigated and the culprits punished. Despite countless promises and documents signed by the various governments in power, the truth speaks for itself: no one, ever, has been convicted in Guatemala for killing a union leader.

In the context of the Organization of American States, since the forty-first General Assembly held in 2011 in the city of San Salvador, El Salvador, we have denounced the systemic anti-union violence in Guatemala. Even more serious is the situation of women living with intimidation, looting, displacement, trafficking and other serious problems such as gender violence, known as femicide. 261 women were killed in Guatemala between 2000 and 2012, and in the first two months of 2013, 133 of such cases were reported. Therefore, we reject all forms of violence and harassment against women in the political, social and labor spheres.

We repudiate the reversal of the judgment by the Court of Constitutionality of Guatemala against the former dictator Efrain Rios Montt, who was sentenced to 80 years in prison for the crime of genocide and crimes against humanity. Impunity in any form is a source of violence and insecurity for citizens and peoples. We request that the OAS uses all the established mechanisms in the Inter-American System to prevent this coup from being perpetuated.

C. Final considerations

Any comprehensive drug control policy must, rather than criminalizing youth and expanding the War on Drugs, include strengthening institutions for the protection of human rights.

We request that the General Secretariat of the OAS provide ongoing technical support to States to achieve the purposes, objectives and actions of the Declaration of Guatemala.
We also request that a plan of action is defined to supplement the Declaration of Guatemala and to take into consideration the proposals set out by the labor movement in different statements and scenarios, especially in the present Declaration.

We have come here to demand responsibility, commitment, efficiency and dialogue to make our region the land of peace that we all deserve. We commit to actively participating in the design and implementation of policies to ensure peace and security, based on full respect for human and labor rights.

IV. **RECOMMENDATIONS BY PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS**

A. **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF AGRICULTURAL, COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL AND FINANCIAL ASSOCIATIONS (CACIF)**

On behalf of the Organized Private Sector of Guatemala, we are pleased to participate in one of the central events of the 43rd General Assembly of the Organization of American States, which has placed Antigua Guatemala in the eyes of the continent.

Antigua is a city of fantasy and colonial charm, surrounded by its impressive volcanoes and fertile mountains that allow us to taste its delicious climate and coffee, walk tirelessly on its cobblestone streets and, especially, enjoy the hospitality of its people.

We take this opportunity to extend our kind greetings to the Heads of Delegation, to the Secretary General of the OAS and to those that visit us from abroad, as well as the representatives of the organizations that work in and from Guatemala, for the trust and appreciation that they show us with their presence.

I have the pleasure to summarize the principal conclusions that emanated from the different presentations, initiatives and proposals shared during the OAS Private Sector Forum that took place on Friday, May 31, 2013 under the theme “Connecting Businesses as Partners for Prosperity with Security in the Americas”.

- In this sense, the Organized Private Sector of Guatemala and the American continent recognizes the need to invest in security and institutions as necessary conditions for the business climate and development in the region.

- We highlight the importance of promoting a better business climate that promotes attracting investment, the defense of the principle of private property, individual rights and constitutional guarantees for business.

- We would like to reiterate one of the conclusions of the panel-forum “Economic Impact of Corruption and Violence,” in which it was shown in evidence that those countries with high corruption and insecurity indicators also have low economic performance.

- We also agree on one of the points that came out of that panel: to combat corruption, the active participation of business owners is necessary as a promoter of public policies on transparency and as a manager of social auditing processes from the private sector.
For this reason, we applaud the initiatives fostered by the chambers of commerce, business organizations and foundations in Latin America to also promote public policies on security, combating corruption and promoting investment. But it is necessary to promote the training of political bodies to participate in the private sector. In this sense, we recognize the effort the School of Government Foundation is carrying out to develop a School of Government to become the regional reference for superior education on the subject of public administration and management.

We also underscore the commitment of the business sectors of Latin America to promote an ethical promise in their relations with their respective governmental interlocutors. The opening, transparency, accountability and search for common principles in the areas of democracy, rule of law and economic development are the guiding principles that should orient the relationship between private and public actors.

As the private sector, we would also like to emphasize the need to promote an agenda of public-private partnerships in the area of security, in which the contribution of technological resources from business is fomented in order to foster the combat against the scourges of violence and insecurity.

We also highlight the efforts conducted by business actors across the region. In Guatemala, for example, the project Alertos has allowed for the integration of business resources from a neighborhood of Guatemala City with law enforcement at the municipal and national levels with a view to generate a comprehensive surveillance and reaction system.

It is also necessary to promote the use of technology in security. The examples of Microsoft and the Port of Miami are paradigms of how software development and technological processes have facilitated the implementation of security measures in business and international trade hubs.

We also wish to highlight the reflections that arose during the ministerial debate. The need for the executive and legislative branches to work together to develop public policies to combat violence and promote a better investment climate was also shown in evidence. Similarly, the role the business sectors in the Americas can exercise as managers of the joint process between the powers of the State and civil society was demonstrated.

The need to promote violence prevention programs that go along with job creation was also evidenced. A young person that is productive, incorporated into the economy and business, is one less young person that can get involved in the illegal market.

A clear project to promote these violence prevention and job creation programs was mentioned by the President of AILA through chains of large and small companies are created that foment the growth of SMEs as promoters of employment.

With respect to the presentation of the keynote speaker of the event who identified the need to understand the social and cultural environment of the surrounding populations at the poles of investment, we see that it is essential to strengthen corporate social responsibility programs as a mechanism to harmonize the business objectives of investment with the respective social needs of those populations.

As the Business Sector of the Americas, we understand our role as strategic partners of the governments and regional organizations in combating corruption and promoting security. We
applaud the generation of spaces such as the Private Sector Forum in the framework of the OAS General Assembly as a key mechanism to tighten the ties of cooperation among the stakeholders.

- We also recognize the necessity to seek strategic solutions in fighting the scourge of narcotrafficking. We understand that in the current environment, Latin America faces very large challenges to its political and social stability, which are primarily manifested in uncontrollable violence and corruption. However, we also believe it necessary to highlight that any proposal to combat narcotrafficking should not put public health and the foundation of the social fabric—the family—at risk.

Therefore, to summarize all of these conclusions, I take this opportunity to thank the contributions received from all of the presenters and the organizations that actively participated in the forum.

In addition, in honor of the common challenges we face in the hemisphere, we hope that this high-level encounter is effective in favorably influencing the rule of law, governance, transparency, competition and integral development of our peoples.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BUSINESS TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON LABOR AFFAIRS (CEATAL)

1. The employer perspective on developing a comprehensive policy against the world drug problem in the Americas

On behalf of the Canadian Employers Council and the Business Technical Advisory Committee on Labor Issues (CEATAL), I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this most important topic of developing a comprehensive policy against the world drug problem in the Americas.

In my role as a representative of hemispheric employers, I will focus my comments on the role of employers and employment in addressing the adverse impacts of the drug problem in our societies and our workplaces. I will be placing a particular emphasis on the impact of the drug problem on young people – keeping in mind that the “drug problem” is a broad concept that covers drug producers, drug sellers, drug runners, drug users, and family members and communities affected by drugs.

To begin, I would like to congratulate all those involved in the preparation of the Draft Declaration for a thoughtful and comprehensive document that addresses numerous issues related to addressing the drug problem in the Americas. I note, however, that the Draft Declaration does not squarely address the role of employers and the crucial importance of productive employment in addressing the drug problem. In our view, employers in the hemisphere have taken leadership roles in engaging communities on issues related to drugs, and have acted within their own workplaces to accommodate and rehabilitate drug users.

My message to you today is, in part, that employers are actively working to address the drug problem through their own initiatives and through innovative partnerships. My message is also that employers can play an even greater role through more effective partnerships, better coordination of efforts, and the dissemination of best practices.
2. The impact of the drug problem on labor productivity

As we all know, substance abuse detrimentally affects individual health and consequently creates social and economic costs for communities at large. Beyond this, numerous adverse conditions are closely associated with the broader drug problem: illegal economies, violence, organized crime, poor health, failure in education, unemployment, poverty, neglect, abuse, and domestic violence.

The drug problem places a direct financial burden on our societies because of costs associated with healthcare and the drain on productivity. In fact, it is estimated that approximately US$200-250 billion would be needed to cover all drug treatment costs worldwide.

Within the workplace, drug use affects productivity because it contributes to absenteeism, workplace accidents, poor performance, and conflict. This loss of productivity affects the overall effectiveness of the labor force and consequently reduces opportunities for new workers, particularly young people. Studies in Canada and the United States have shown that estimated labor productivity losses resulting from drug use are actually higher than the treatment costs of drug use. A 2011 study estimated drug-related productivity losses in the United States alone at $120 billion in 2007. A similar 2002 study in Canada suggested that productivity losses due to drug use amounted to Cdn$4.7 billion in one year.

Unemployment and lack of opportunities, especially among youth, are related to individual drug use and the drug trade. In fact, the rates of illicit drug use among unemployed individuals were about double those among employed individuals. Consumption of drugs may prevent an individual from entering or remaining in the workforce, while the frustration of unemployment may also lead to drug consumption. The relationship between drugs and employment often creates a “vicious circle”. Particularly among young men, a lack of work opportunities increases the likelihood of participation in drug trafficking.

3. The role of employers in addressing the drug problem in the workplace

Employers experience the impact of the hemispheric drug problem frequently and directly. Substance abuse by employees is common, impacts productivity and morale, and presents real risks for safety in many workplaces.

While safety informs employer responses to the drug problem, it is important to emphasize that the approaches of many employers have evolved from one of deterrence, control and punishment to one of prevention, accommodation and support. The modern approach treats substance abuse as principally a health care issue, and it includes features such as:

- Taking active measures such as education and training to improve working conditions and prevent drug use in the workplace;
- Adopting a comprehensive workplace drug policy which maintains the confidentiality of all information communicated by employees concerning drug-related problems;
- Providing treatment and rehabilitation opportunities to employees with a view to reintegration into the workforce; and
- Consulting with employees and their representatives on the content and administration of drug policies in the workplace.
Indeed, a workplace substance abuse program will be most effective where the relevant stakeholders collaborate with each other. Management must be committed to developing and implementing the program in close cooperation with workers and their representatives in order to ensure workers’ acceptance of, and participation in, the program. Specifically, workers’ representatives should play an active role in the process of restoring worker’s health and well-being. A high level of collaboration should be readily achievable since both employers and workers’ representatives share the same goal of a safe and healthy workplace.

4. The role of employers in addressing the needs of young people

Creating better opportunities in the workforce and society for young people is essential to preventing them from becoming embroiled in the drug problem. Hence, job creation, economic growth, education, skills development, and entrepreneurship must be key planks in any strategy to combat the drug problem in the Americas.

Employers in the private sector have been playing an active role in integrating the youth population into their communities and the formal labor market. Acting alone or in partnerships, many employers have created mutually beneficial schemes that promote the economic and social integration of young people.

One example I wanted to share with you is that of TELUS Corporation, one of Canada’s largest companies. TELUS has implemented community outreach programs that are often held out as a model for other companies. One of its initiatives, the TELUS Day of Giving, permits its employees worldwide to commit a working day to community projects. Many of these projects focus on the needs of underprivileged youth. In fact, TELUS’ Central American employees have dedicated their Day of Giving to building and refurbishing schools in rural communities.

There are literally hundreds of examples of companies reaching out to their communities with initiatives similar to the one implemented by TELUS.

In addition, numerous partnerships currently exist that are directed at improving the employability of youth and promoting youth entrepreneurship. These partnerships involve private sector entities coming together, often with the assistance of public actors. Many of these partnerships have been created to focus on strengthening communities and deterring youth from becoming involved in illicit activities. Examples include:

- The Youth Career Initiative (YCI), a partnership of international hotel companies and the International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) to create career opportunities for young people;

- The Youth Fund for Innovation and Social Action (Youth Fund), established by the Inter-American Development Bank in partnership with Microsoft to promote youth entrepreneurship; and

- NEO (New Employment Opportunities), a corporate partnership dedicated to creating job opportunities for youth, which was launched at the 2012 Summit of Americas.

While it is possible to recount success stories from across the hemisphere, it is acknowledged that employers can do more to contribute to a hemispheric drug strategy. Employers would welcome the assistance of governments and the OAS in coordinating efforts, identifying and promoting
best practices, studying the impact of initiatives, and encouraging further efforts to engage youth and divert them away from the drug trade.