**CEATAL’S PERSPECTIVE ON PROMOTING INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPERITY IN THE HEMISPHERE**

**OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**WASHINGTON DC – SUNDAY, JUNE 3, 2018**

Chair and Distinguished Representatives,

I represent the Canadian Employers Council and the Business Technical Advisory Committee on Labour Issues (CEATAL). CEATAL is the organization that represents the employer organizations of each OAS member state. Through these organizations, CEATAL represents tens of thousands of small, medium and large employers across the Americas.

I bring greetings from Daniel Funes de Rioja, CEATAL’s President, who is unable to attend this year’s General Assembly. On his behalf, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the issues being discussed in this session of the General Assembly and, in particular, to address the specific theme related to integral development and prosperity.

Let me begin by acknowledging the valuable work of the OAS in developing strategies for development and prosperity. The OAS’ strength lies in its unique ability to provide a framework for horizontal cooperation and to facilitate the dissemination of best practices to the social partners in all member states. Through the tripartite model, the OAS advances important labour and socio-economic issues, facilitates bilateral and multilateral dialogue, develops and disseminates best practices, and promotes the sharing of research and information amongst member states. Of particular note is the Inter-American Network for Labour Administration (the RIAL), a mechanism within the OAS that promotes cooperation on labour administration and labour market issues. The RIAL has strengthened the capacities of governments and the social partners by sponsoring and coordinating projects, social dialogue and research.

I would now like to address integral development and prosperity from the private sector employer perspective. As employers, we believe that social and economic progress are inextricably linked. Addressing poverty, inequality and other social deficits in the Americas depends on developing local and regional economies, which in turn requires making important investments in education and skills development in order to grow the formal economy.

For this to occur, a vital private sector is critical, and must be respected and supported. In most countries, the private sector is not only the major driver of economic activity but is also the predominant creator of new jobs. A robust private sector is also crucial to democratic development – political freedom goes hand in hand with economic freedom.

I would like to make comments on three specific development issues: youth entrepreneurship, gender equality and social dialogue.

1) Youth Entrepreneurship

For our region to achieve enduring development and prosperity, we must equip young people with the skills, resources and values that they need to succeed. This requires a focus on key issues like education, health care, safe communities, skills training, and the promotion of entrepreneurship.

One of the biggest enemies of development is high youth unemployment – it is a waste of the talent and energy of young people, can be demoralizing, and can cause young people to give up looking for work altogether and turn to activities outside the formal economy. We encourage the OAS and member states to promote entrepreneurship as a viable career path for young people. This requires public education curriculums to be designed to provide the skills needed for young people to succeed in business. Young entrepreneurs create jobs for others and become community role models and leaders. We need as many of them in the Americas as we can get.

2) Gender Equality

The full and equal participation of women in economic and social life is also crucial to integral development and prosperity in the Americas. No country or region can achieve its full economic and social potential when women are excluded, underemployed, and treated unfairly in terms of career opportunities and compensation.

Employers are committed to an agenda of full equality by, for example, removing systems and barriers that prevent women from entering the labour market or particular occupations, achieving pay equity, and being promoted to the highest levels of the organization. Employers are also committed to working with governments and workers to dismantle discriminatory barriers and to develop new approaches so that individuals can find the balance between career and family life that is appropriate for their needs and circumstances.

3) Social Dialogue

 Finally, I wish to emphasize that social dialogue must be considered a crucial institution for achieving development and prosperity. Governments must consult with the private sector and worker representatives, and this consultation must be regular and meaningful. As I mentioned at the beginning of my presentation, we acknowledge the very important role of the OAS in promoting meaningful social dialogue in the hemisphere, and we ask the OAS to move forward with further initiatives on this issue.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this dialogue.