



ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
Inter-American Council for Integral Development
(CIDI)



**MEETING OF WORKING GROUPS 1 AND 2
OF THE XX INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE OF
MINISTERS OF LABOR (IACML)**
September 10 and 15, 2020
Washington, D.C.

OEA/Ser.L/XIX.VI.1
CIMT-20/GT1-GT2/doc.18/20
15 December 2020
Original: Spanish

**SUMMARY AND KEY IDEAS OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF
WORKING GROUP 2 OF THE XX IACML**

“Institutional Strengthening to Protect Workers’ and Employers’ Rights and Obligations and Foster Cooperation”

CONTENTS

I.	Description and Participants.....	1
II.	Background.....	2
III.	Key Ideas from the Working Group 2 Meeting	2
	Information session: The IACML Work Plan 2018–2020 and the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL)	3
	Panel 1: Social Dialogue in the Response to COVID-19	5
	Panel 2: Occupational Safety and Health: Intersectoral Coordination and Labor Inspection	8
	Panel 3: Social Protection in the Face of COVID-19.....	11
IV.	Closing of the Meeting.....	13

I. DESCRIPTION AND PARTICIPANTS

The virtual meeting of Working Group 2 of the XX Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor (IACML) of the Organization of American States (OAS) was held September 15, 2020 over Zoom platform. The meeting was jointly organized by the Ministries of Labor of Argentina (Chair of Working Group 2), Canada and Costa Rica (Vice-Chairs), with the support of the IACML Technical Secretariat in the Department of Human Development, Education, and Employment of the OAS Executive Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI).

The meeting was attended by delegations from 27 OAS Member State Ministries of Labor. Also present were representatives of the advisory bodies, the Trade Union Technical Advisory Council (COSATE) and the Business Technical Advisory Committee on Labor Matters (CEATAL), and specialists from the International Labor Organization (ILO), the Ibero-American Social Security Organization (OISS), the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), and the OAS.

All of the information from this meeting is available at: www.oas.org/sedi (click [here](#))

II. BACKGROUND

The IACML's Working Groups were redefined during the XX IACML held in Bridgetown, Barbados in December 2017, in an effort to reflect the current priorities of the ministries of labor and the spirit of the Declaration and Plan of Action of Bridgetown. The Working Group's officers were also elected at that time:

- Working Group 1 (WG1): “Integrated Public Policies for Productive Employment and Decent Work with Social Inclusion” – Ministries of Labor of Ecuador (Chair), and Brazil and Chile (Vice Chairs)
- Working Group 2 (WG2): “Institutional Strengthening to Protect Workers' and Employers' Rights and Promote Cooperation” – Ministries of Labor of Argentina (Chair), and Canada and Costa Rica (Vice Chairs)

According to the Plan of Action of Bridgetown (XX IACML), the Working Groups were set up in order to “advise the IACML regarding the objectives of the Declaration of Bridgetown” and, to that end, “will examine in greater depth the topics identified in this Plan of Action, facilitate the exchange of experiences, provide pertinent information and studies, and follow up on related hemispheric initiatives.”

Additionally, Article 8 of the Plan of Action of Bridgetown provides that WG2 will follow up on the following topics of the Bridgetown Declaration: Promoting awareness of the rights of all workers, including migrant workers; strengthening enforcement of labor legislation and regulations; strengthening of social dialogue and collective bargaining; hemispheric cooperation on labor matters; and strengthening the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL), among others.

To follow up on these mandates, at the IACML Planning Meeting in 2018, the Conference authorities included in the Work Plan 2018–2020, one meeting of the Working Groups, which was held in Quito, Ecuador in December 2019. In May 2020, the authorities decided to hold an additional meeting of the Working Groups in 2020, in order to analyze and share experiences on topics relevant to the world of work in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and considering that the XXI IACML, originally planned for December 2020, had been postponed to 2021. This is a report on that meeting.

III. KEY IDEAS FROM THE WORKING GROUP 2 MEETING

In consultation with the Working Group officers, and based on the information available on the effects of the pandemic in the region, the meeting's main themes were: “Social Dialogue in the Response to COVID-19,” “Occupational Safety and Health: Intersectoral Coordination and Labor Inspection,” and “Social Protection in the Face of COVID-19.” These topics were addressed during thematic panels, with introductory presentations and open space for dialogue, the main thrusts of which are shared below. The meeting also included a session on the “IACML Work Plan and the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL).”

The virtual meeting of WG2 of the XX IACML discussed in this report was inaugurated and moderated by Gerardo Corres, Director of International Affairs of the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security of Argentina, Chair of WG2, who thanked the attendees and underscored the

importance that spaces for regional cooperation and policy dialogue like the IACML have for meeting labor ministries' priority objectives.

Surveys were conducted live throughout the meeting. The results are contained in document CIMT-20/GT1-GT2/doc.16/20 and discussed in the corresponding sections of this report.

Information session: IACML Work Plan 2018–2020 and the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL)

This session consisted of OAS presentations on the status of the IACML Work Plan 2018–2020 and activities and finances of the RIAL, given by Jesús Schucry Giacomán, Director of the Department of Human Development, Education, and Employment (DHDEE); María Claudia Camacho, Labor and Employment Section Chief; and Guillermo Calzada, Program Officer, Labor and Employment Section, DHDEE

Below is a summary of the main points of the reports presented as well as of the remarks made by the delegations of Costa Rica, Colombia, Barbados, and CEATAL.

- The Technical Secretariat presented the updated 2018–2020 Work Plan of the IACML (CIMT-20/GT1-GT2/doc.12/20), emphasizing that until the pandemic hit, the plan was being implemented fully, with two hemispheric workshops, 14 bilateral cooperation activities, one meeting of the Working Groups, and coordination to secure the participation of workers in the sessions of the OAS General Assembly and the Summit of the Americas.
- In May 2020, the Conference authorities held a virtual meeting to adjust the Work Plan in light of the crisis generated by the pandemic. The following are the main decisions made at that meeting:
 - Go forward with the celebration of the IACML in-person, but hold it in September 2021 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. This decision was approved by the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI) via Resolution CIDI/RES. 343 (CIII-O/20).
 - Hold virtual meetings of Working Groups 1 and 2 in 2020. The meetings of WG1 and WG2 were held on September 10 and September 15, respectively, as indicated in this report.
 - Cancel the Gender Workshop scheduled for May 2020 in Argentina and ask the Technical Secretariat to prepare a proposal to replace it with a series of virtual activities. This proposal was presented at the meeting of WG1 on September 10, 2020 and is contained in document: CIMT-20/GT1-GT2/doc.13/20.
 - Conduct RIAL cooperation activities virtually when the countries involved so choose; and

- Instruct the Secretariat to continue to update the Portfolio of Ministry of Labor Responses to COVID-19 and the Repository of Guidelines for Deconfinement, as new RIAL outputs developed in the wake of the pandemic.
- The Secretariat presented a preliminary timeline for preparations for the XXI IACML, which includes:
 - Presentation of the preliminary draft agenda of the XXI IACML by the Delegation of Argentina during a meeting of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI) for its approval in late 2020. The proposal will include the inputs received from the IACML delegations and authorities¹.
 - The authorities, together with the Technical Secretariat, will prepare the final reports of the Working Groups to be presented to the Conference.
 - Early 2021: The delegation of Argentina will work with the Technical Secretariat to draft the first version of the draft Declaration and Plan of Action of Buenos Aires.
 - Open virtual forum for comments from the delegations on the first version of the Declaration and Plan of Action.
 - Mid 2021: Second Preparatory Meeting of the XXI IACML, during which the final version of the draft Declaration and Plan of Action will be discussed.
 - September 22–24, 2021: XXI Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor in Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- The Secretariat presented the RIAL’s reports on Activities (CIMT-20/GT1-GT2/doc.14/20) and Finances (CIMT-20/GT1-GT2/doc.15/20), which highlight the main results and impacts the RIAL has had on the institutional capacities of the ministries of labor as well as the different activities undertaken, including 113 bilateral cooperation activities, 24 hemispheric workshops on priority topics for the ministries of labor, technical studies, biweekly newsletters, webinars and virtual meetings, and the online program portfolio.
- The two outputs the RIAL produced in response to the pandemic were presented: The “Portfolio of Responses from Ministries of Labor to COVID-19,” which brings together more than 390 measures adopted by the ministries to tackle the crisis; and the “Repository of Guidelines and Protocols for Deconfinement and Return to Work,” which assembles more than 70 useful resources for the ministries of labor of the region at this time. Both of these are available to the public on the RIAL’s website: www.rialnet.org.
- The delegates highlighted some of the clearest impacts the RIAL has had on their respective countries:

¹ Note from the Secretariat: To the date of the preparation of this report, it has been confirmed that the presentation of the preliminary draft agenda of the XXI IACML before CIDI will take place in early 2021

- The delegation from Costa Rica's Ministry of Labor pointed out that the RIAL's effectiveness lies in the fact that the experiences tend to materialize into concrete plans. The delegation shared that recent cooperation with Uruguay on domestic work ended up providing very valuable inputs for the process of putting together a pilot plan for implementation of C189, noting that solutions not previously thought of were found during the activity.
 - The delegation from Colombia's Ministry of Labor noted that, thanks to a RIAL cooperation with Brazil, a tripartite international relations committee was established and has had great results. The delegation called on governments to continue strengthening the RIAL because it produces concrete results, further indicating that in the context of COVID-19, the Portfolio of Responses and Repository of Protocols for Deconfinement have been very useful for giving ideas about a path to follow in formulating policies.
 - The delegation from the Ministry of Labor of Barbados highlighted the positive results of bilateral cooperation activities in the framework of the RIAL as a provider, with St. Vincent and the Grenadines, on occupational safety and health (OSH), and as a requester, with Panama, on inspection.
- As to the RIAL's financial situation, the Technical Secretariat reported that 21 of the 34 member states had contributed to the Voluntary Contribution Fund—half in amounts exceeding US\$20,000. The Technical Secretariat thanked the contributing countries, especially Canada, which has contributed US\$353,000 since the fund was created, and underscored the unpredictability of annual contributions, as well as disparities in terms of the regularity and amounts of contributions.
 - The financial situation was reported to be positive, thanks primarily to Canada's contribution. The RIAL currently has US\$45,625 available, while US\$120,000 is required annually to keep up its activities as it has done to this date.
 - The delegations agreed that administrative and budget constraints were major obstacles that impeded ongoing contributions and called for other contribution mechanisms to be pursued, e.g., in kind contributions when, receiving delegations in bilateral cooperation activities or when offering to host workshops.
 - There was broad consensus regarding the need to continue strengthening the RIAL. The delegations thanked the Technical Secretariat for its work.

Panel 1: Social Dialogue in the Response to COVID-19

This panel consisted of presentations by Bredio Mitre, Director of International Technical Cooperation, Ministry of Labor and Work Development of Panama; Marta Pujadas, President of the Trade Union Technical Advisory Council (COSATE); and Daniel Funes de Rioja, Chair of the Business Technical Advisory Committee on Labor Matters (CEATAL).

In addition to the presentations, there was a dialogue during which delegations of Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and CEATAL offered comments.

The following is a summary of the main points raised in the presentations and remarks made during the dialogue:

- The delegations recognized social dialogue as being essential to achieving social and economic objectives in policies to respond to the crisis and as an effective tool of consensus for protecting the health of workers, safeguarding businesses' financial sustainability, settling labor disputes arising from the pandemic, and validating public policies, among others.
- The delegations agreed that social dialogue has played a priority role in their national experiences, both through mechanisms created specially to deal with the pandemic and through the activation of already existing systems to come up with ways to protect jobs, incomes, and wages. The following are some of the experiences shared:
 - Panama's Tripartite Working Group was created in response to the pandemic and included representatives of the government and of eight of the most representative workers and employers organizations. The Tripartite Working Group had three work committees and its main outcomes include telework regulations, adoption of measures such as the suspension of employment contracts and a ban on new hiring to replace suspended workers, amendments to laws, and an upgrade of the ministry's website to enable procedures to be completed online. All of the agreements have been implemented via executive or ministerial decrees.
 - Ecuador's National Wages and Labor Council, a social dialogue body that operates on an ongoing basis in the country, has achieved results that include the development of guidelines on telework and the suspension of work days during the pandemic, among other provisions.
 - Trinidad and Tobago's National Tripartite Advisory Committee, a social dialogue mechanism in place since 2016, saw a new multiple-member committee added—including employers, workers, and academics—to come up with medium- and long-term responses to the pandemic. One of the Committee's key outputs was a post-COVID-19 roadmap for Trinidad and Tobago.
 - Colombia's Ministry of Labor highlighted the involvement of social actors in the Employment Mission created to respond to pandemic-related job losses and to guide structural changes. It also shared the work done by the Special Conflict Resolution Commission, which has settled labor disputes arising from the pandemic, and by the National Commission for Dialogue, wherein ministers from different sectors have listened to employers' and workers' needs. The Ministry emphasized the need for a quicker response by all actors in these times.

- The delegation of Argentina recognized social dialogue as an effective tool for securing the signing of collective sector agreements—especially in sectors particularly affected by the crisis—as well as policies for their implementation.
 - Nicaragua’s Ministry of Labor underscored the fact that social dialogue had been institutionalized by constitutional principle. As a result of social dialogue during the pandemic, wage levels were adjusted and norms were developed for safe and healthy workplaces.
 - The delegation of Bolivia indicated that social dialogue had been used to reach consensus on telework in coordination with the entire business sector, and to devise a reactivation plan for all sectors, especially micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises.
 - The Ministry of Labor of the Dominican Republic indicated that creation of the FASE program (incentives for workers’ subsistence) and agreements for reviving tourism had been the result of social dialogue in the country.
- The participants highlighted the central role played by representatives of workers and employers in coordinating policies to protect the health and safety of workers during the pandemic:
 - Panama’s Ministry of Labor and Work Development reported that an agreement had been reached through the Tripartite Working Group on implementation of Health and Safety Committees in businesses as well as different Occupational Safety and Health measures such as reduced staffing, shifts in work hours, and measures to treat work-related stress.
 - The delegation of Peru shared the actions taken by its National Occupational Health and Safety Council, wherein five temporary technical committees had been created to address OSH from different vantage points. Outcomes included COVID-19 being declared an occupational illness, mental health policies, and the *Yo Trabajo Seguro y Saludable* [I Work Safely and Healthily] campaign.
 - The delegation of Argentina indicated that worker and employer participation had been key to developing sector biosecurity protocols.
- There was broad consensus that social dialogue experiences in the response to the emergency had helped to strengthen existing mechanisms, which in turn offered an opportunity for stronger institutionalized social dialogue in constructing the new normal.
 - During her presentation, the Chair of COSATE emphasized that the main challenge to emerging from the crisis lay in designing a recovery that rebuilds the social contract between governments and societies. She called for social dialogue mechanisms to be strengthened as a first step toward resilience so as to weave the economic recovery equitably. ILO recommendation 105 provides that in situations of crisis, human rights must be respected, including the rights to work and basic labor standards. To that end,

institutionalized social dialogue is necessary and States must have permanent tripartite structures in place to enable debate about the public policies to be implemented. Creating an institutional framework for dialogue should serve to generate sustainable and inclusive development, give workers a larger say in the distribution of wealth, and narrow the gap between extreme poverty and concentrated wealth. She called for a great deal of emphasis to be placed, through social dialogue on the road to recovery, on the quality of jobs for which international labor standards establish a fair and equitable framework; and for urgent measures to be implemented, e.g., national social protection floors and funding for universal public health coverage. Lastly, she indicated that promotion of institutionalized social dialogue should be a core pillar of the next OAS Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor.

- In his comments, the Chair of CEATAL indicated that common solutions to shared problems had to be sought. He emphasized that what makes this crisis unique is how unpredictable it is, which in turn compels the region to act first by responding to the urgency of the health emergency, and thereafter with policies designed to emerge from the financial crisis. He agreed with COSATE that, to achieve this, social dialogue must be effective and institutionalized. As an example, he shared the case of Argentina, where social actors had been able to be involved in the agreements that determined lockdown measures, essential activities, and sector protocols. He pointed out that it was necessary to be able to adjust and adapt to new realities, including, *inter alia*, efforts from the business sector, social protection, incentives to create small and medium-sized (SMEs) enterprises, responses to informality, and productive transformation. He proposed that the OAS, together with other multilateral organizations, and with the participation of COSATE and CEATAL, push for a common project of the Americas in which workers and employers could propose solutions looking forward to enable development, social inclusion, and technological and connectivity inclusion, for greater integration within and greater projection outside the region.
- In the live survey conducted during this Panel, 74% of the respondents believed that social dialogue had been effective after the pandemic was declared—40% indicated that existing social dialogue mechanisms had been activated and 34%, that new mechanisms had been created.

Panel 2: Occupational Safety and Health: Intersectoral Coordination and Labor Inspection

Presentations by Julietta Rodríguez, Regional Advisor on Workers' Health of the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO); Brenda Baxter, Director General, Workplace Directorate, Labour Program of Employment and Social Development Canada; and Marcelo Domínguez, General Manager, Superintendency of Occupational Risks of Argentina

The following is a summary of the main points of the presentations, as well as of the remarks by Barbados, Ecuador, CEATAL, and COSATE:

- PAHO's representative, Julietta Rodríguez, presented the main actions undertaken by her organization with respect to workers' health pre- and post-pandemic. She

emphasized that recognizing and addressing the social determinants of health is crucial to achieving the goal of universal health [coverage], as is integrating health in all public policies using an intersectoral approach. The intersectoral nature of workers' health is, in effect, a given, in that it impacts many economic sectors at the same time, and that an array of external determinants and policies affect it.

- Ms. Rodríguez also highlighted the Regional Plan on Workers' Health, approved by ministers of health, which provides for preventive interventions at the workplace in coordination with all productive sectors and seeks to implement intersectoral policies and strategies.
- With regard to the COVID-19 pandemic—"the great challenge of 2020"—PAHO proposes developing ongoing response plans, planning safe and healthy work environments, preventing the virus from reaching the workplace and containing its spread, and verifying workers' level of risk. PAHO has developed a large number of guides and protocols, especially on the health and safety of healthcare workers.
- Ms. Rodríguez stated that what is needed to achieve real solutions for vulnerable populations is an approach based on health determinants that takes into account the context, enormous inequalities, and the fact that the region is eminently urban. She further stated that there is currently a window of opportunity to find solutions given that all sectors (health, labor, etc.) are involved, and that "the new normal can be a better normal."
- Delegations noted that in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, intersectoral coordination had been strengthened, especially with regard to identifying critical sectors.
 - The delegation of Canada noted that even before the first case of the disease had appeared in their country, they began inter-departmental planning sessions to map out the government response and identify critical services.
 - Argentina's Superintendency of Occupational Risks (SRT) noted that during the country's "Social, Preventive, and Mandatory Isolation," coordination meetings were held between national ministries, provincial governments, and municipalities to expand or reduce the list of essential activities.
- One of the main results of intersectoral coordination in response to the crisis was the preparation of OSH protocols and guidelines, both for essential activities during the lockdown, as well as for a healthy reopening:
 - The Government of Argentina indicated that an intersectoral dialogue exercise had led to the development of an Superintendency of Occupational Risks' general protocol on reducing spread in the workplace, in addition to an array of sector protocols on health and safety and the return to work.

- The Ministries of Labor and of Health of Barbados introduced protocols targeting the most important sectors, among them tourism, entertainment complexes, beauty salons, and construction.
- The Emergency Operations Committee of Ecuador prepared general directives, sector protocols, and guidelines for returning to work with inputs from the Ministries of Labor and Health, the Ecuadoran Institute for Social Security, and the National Directorate for Occupational Risk.
- Labor inspections are critical for protecting workers' health and safety and the importance of improving them was noted. Some national experiences were shared.
 - The Government of Canada highlighted the virtual inspection strategy it had implemented to investigate workplace risks and cases of refusal to work, especially in transportation.
 - The Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security of Argentina noted the preparation of special guidelines for inspectors, as well as the implementation of new channels for filing complaints and staff increases to handle them.
 - The Ministry of Labor of Barbados noted the creation of the "COVID-19 Monitoring Unit," which is comprised of OSH personnel from the ministries of labor and health, who conduct inspections to verify compliance with health measures.
- Good Occupational Safety and Health practices were shared:
 - The Ministry of Labour of Canada identified weekly meetings with sectors involved in OSH policies to share the most up-to-date information and guidelines as a best practice. The Ministry also highlighted the importance of having good ongoing communication as a lesson learned.
 - The Government of Argentina highlighted Decree DNV No. 367/20, which establishes COVID-19 as an unlisted occupational illness. This enabled occupational risk insurers to provide coverage to more than 97,000 workers from essential sectors who had contracted the disease.
 - The Ministry of Labor of Ecuador noted that workplace exposure to COVID-19 had been determined to be an occupational injury.
- The COSATE representative emphasized that Occupational Safety and Health plays a critical role in economic reactivation and that the way to manage the "dichotomy" that, according to some rhetoric, exists between the economy and health is to ensure that workplaces are equipped with protection equipment and access to hygiene and that COVID-19 is recognized as an occupational illness. COSATE recalled that the ILO Governing Body was debating at that time whether to continue the process of recognizing OSH as a fundamental right at work.

- The CEATAL representative reiterated that the tripartite approach should be the decisive component in coordinating actions and measures, given that workers and employers are the ones who implement them in practice. He suggested delegations to consider inspections not only as a vehicle for meting out penalties, but also for providing guidance and orientation on the most efficient ways to implement protocols.
- In the live survey conducted during this Panel, 47% of respondents considered that coordination between ministries of labor and health in response to the crisis has been “good,” and 24% believed it had been “optimal–excellent.”

Panel 3: Social Protection in the Face of COVID-19

Presentations by Gina Magnolia Riaño, Secretary General of the Ibero-American Social Security Organization (OISS); Pablo Casali, Specialist in Social Security of the ILO Office for the Andean Countries; and Marcos Solano, National Employment Director, Ministry of Labor and Social Security of Costa Rica

Below is a summary of both the presentations and the remarks made during the dialogue by CEATAL and COSATE:

- When the pandemic struck, Latin America and the Caribbean already had persistent gaps, such as income inequality and a dearth of decent work, that needed to urgently be addressed and that have since grown worse. The sectors hardest hit by the crisis (lodging, food, commerce, and manufacturing) account for 60% of the region’s economy. According to the ILO representative, this will have the effect of exacerbating inequality gaps.
- Mention was made of progress in both contributory as well as non-contributory social protection coverage in the region from 2005 to 2019—with the former climbing up to 10 percentage points, and the latter amounting to 40% coverage of the region’s population. This coverage was nevertheless deemed to be insufficient to address the current situation.
- The efforts States have undertaken since the crisis began were recognized, including fiscal packages implemented to offer minimum income security to the population, which, according to the OISS Secretary General, amount to 3.9% of regional GDP.
- The point was made that it is imperative to bolster non-contributory social protection for the most vulnerable sectors by developing a basic social protection floor and minimum income. It is likewise imperative to revise and strengthen contributory systems to ensure the adequacy of pensions systems, which will be under pressure due to job losses and increased demand for benefits.
- The OISS Secretariat indicated that caretaking should be the fourth pillar of social protection insofar as women have seen their work multiply and are more affected by the crisis due to an inequitable distribution of caretaking responsibilities. Furthermore, the Secretariat mentioned the Ibero-American Multilateral Agreement on Social

Security, which is already in effect in 12 countries. The Agreement provides for the accumulation of contribution periods in different countries for access to pensions, coverage of work-related accidents, and occupational illnesses.

- The ILO divides general measures taken by governments to address the crisis into household income support and protection of the contributory capacity of the economy. Household income support measures include adding flexibility to taxes, broadening social protection for the unemployed, and providing subsidies for consumption, among others. Measures to protect the contributory capacity of the economy are classified into three overarching groups: (1) Support for programs (whether existing or new programs); (2) provisional or permanent expansion; and (3) horizontal (coverage capacity) or vertical (quality of application) expansion.
- Mention was made of the following actions to address the challenges the pandemic has brought with it and close pre-existing gaps in social protection: development of guaranteed basic income / social protection floors; horizontal expansion of existing programs; expansion or establishment of unemployment insurance; preservation or expansion of contributory and non-contributory pension systems; and improvements to caretaking systems.
- The representative of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security of Costa Rica shared the experience of establishing and implementing “*Bono Proteger*,” the aim of which is to provide basic income to the public to cope with the pandemic, which has impacted 50% of the population. He highlighted the important role played by “bancarization” (which was done in a parallel manner by providing bank accounts to 200,000 people to receive the benefit) and connectivity (with 98% internet coverage nationwide and an overabundance of cell phones) in implementing this program. He recognized the commitment of the actors involved in order to achieve implementation in record time.
- The CEATAL delegate made an appeal to also have social protection efforts directed to economically strengthening businesses, primarily SMEs, which are the most vulnerable and provide most employment in the region.
- The COSATE delegate emphasized the importance of contributory social protection systems and of making headway towards universal social protection. He acknowledged that many countries have adopted social security mechanisms and unemployment insurance to address the situation, but that they should also implement permanent social protection systems. He further called to reflect on the economy we might be facing in the future, with respect to both technological changes and social protection. The delegate stressed that international cooperation should consider public policies that support entrepreneurship, support for SMEs, and job creation, as well as the establishment of a global social protection fund, without losing sight of informality and the challenges that existed even prior to the pandemic.
- In the live survey conducted during this Panel, participants were asked “What do countries most need to progress towards universal social protection coverage?” 44% answered “political will” and 36% said “economic resources—fiscal space.”

IV. CLOSING OF THE MEETING

Once the panels concluded, the Director of the Department of Human Development, Education, and Employment of the OAS, Jesus Schucry Giacoman, thanked the 27 delegations, COSATE, and CEATAL for their presence. He then welcomed the Minister of Labor, Employment, and Social Security of Argentina, Claudio Omar Moroni, who delivered closing remarks.

In his remarks, Minister Moroni underscored that governments' primary objective should be to pursue a path toward more just societies with greater development, decent work, and social inclusion, which should be the pillars of the XXI IACML, scheduled to take place in Buenos Aires in September 2021. The Minister commended the Working Groups for the meetings and emphasized that measures must continue to focus on, among other things, eliminating inequalities in income, gender, and social status. In this regard, he emphasized that the theme of the XXI IACML would be "Building a more resilient world of work with sustainable development, decent work, and social inclusion."

The Technical Secretariat thanked the participants, highlighted the work of Gerardo Corres, Director, International Affairs of the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security of Argentina, as Chair of the meeting, and called the meeting to a close.