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Inter-American Council for Integral Development
(CIDI)



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OF MINISTERS OF LABOR (IACML)**
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PRELIMINARY DRAFT DECLARATION OF BUENOS AIRES 2021

(Presented by the Delegation of Argentina after reviewing and including the comments made by the delegations in the Virtual Forum¹)

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

1. We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation participating in the XXI Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor (IACML) of the Organization of American States (OAS), met on September 22, 23 and 24, 2021, to take steps towards building a more resilient, inclusive, sustainable, and human-centered future of work for the Americas, considering the health, social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

2. We reaffirm our strong commitment to promoting and respecting the fundamental principles and rights at work, as well as the principles of regional solidarity and cooperation; equity; full and productive employment and decent wages; limited working hours; social protection floors; human rights; and the strengthening of tripartism in labor relations as a means to achieve and maintain social peace and social inclusion, which are enshrined in international documents, including the Charter of the Organization of American States; the Inter-American Democratic Charter; the Social Charter of the Americas; the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; the International Labor Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work; the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization; the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work; and the Resolution on a global call to action for a human-centered recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable, and resilient.

¹ The Virtual Forum of the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor (IACML) was open to receive comments from the delegations on the Draft Declaration and Plan of Action of Buenos Aires between May 3 and June 30, 2021. Delegations from 19 Ministries of Labor, as well as COSATE and CEATAL presented comments.

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

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

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

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

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

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

8. In coordination with relevant institutions, we will seek to strengthen and introduce substantive changes in our social security and social protection systems to guarantee their soundness, sustainability and ensure that they are built on the principles of solidarity, progressive realization, social inclusion and non-discrimination in the world of work, and take steps towards universal social protection, including social protections floors.

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

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

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

11.bis - NEW: We will strengthen national and international cooperation actions to achieve the objectives related to work, employment and development, well-being and social inclusion within the framework of the Program of Action for the Decade of the Americas for the Rights and Dignity of the Persons with Disabilities considering the impact of the pandemic on this population and avoiding the deepening of inequality and the multiple intersectionalities that it faces.

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

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

12. We will develop and implement labor policies articulated and coherent with health and macroeconomic policies in order to achieve socio-economic and employment recovery, while guaranteeing decent work and sustainable enterprises, and strengthening social investment to achieve the effective inclusion of the most vulnerable populations. We will work with the Ministries of Economy and Finance to increase investment in strategic sectors; those most affected by the crisis and those who have a strong potential to create decent work opportunities.

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

14. We will continue improving the interaction and coordination between labor, education and training. In this regard, we celebrate the dialogue and cooperation that we have sustained since the XVIII IACML with the Ministries of Education within the framework of the OAS, and we will continue to

promote, through active public policies, the coordination between professional training and formal education systems placing special emphasis on: technical and professional training; lifelong learning and reskilling; harmonization between training supply and labor demand; greater access to connectivity and affordability of digital technologies; the development of foundational and transferable skills including digital and socio-emotional skills relevant to changes in the world of work; the development of national and regional qualification frameworks and the promotion of entrepreneurship.

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

16. We will develop and strengthen strategies aimed at creating and promoting youth employment; at reducing unemployment and precarious youth employment; at facilitating school-to-work transition and providing technical and vocational education and training opportunities for this age group, especially for those who are in situation of greater vulnerability due to various intersectionalities, including young women, youth with disabilities, migrants, indigenous youth, as well as youth who are involuntarily not in employment, education or training.

SOCIAL DIALOGUE TO RECOVER FROM THE CRISIS AND SECURE A FUTURE OF WORK WITH SOCIAL JUSTICE

17. We recognize that social dialogue is now more important and urgent than ever in the search for consensus and solutions that allow for a sustainable economic recovery and aim to build a “new and better normal” with social justice. We will promote, strengthen, and expand inclusive, open, transparent and intergenerational social dialogue bodies and mechanisms.

18. We consider that broad and participatory social dialogue is a privileged instrument to strengthen labor institutions and guarantee effective compliance with fundamental principles and rights at work. It also constitutes a primary mechanism for generating trust between governments and social actors of the world of work; reaching fair, equitable, and lasting agreements; prevent and resolve conflicts; encourage responsible business conduct and strengthen sustainable enterprises. Therefore, we support and promote institutionalized social dialogue at both domestic and regional levels for building a “new normal.”
(Merged with paragraph 19)

19. *(Merged with paragraph 18)*

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

20. We recognize the central role that Ministries of Labor play, jointly with the institutions in charge of economic policy, to address the effects of the crisis as well as the challenges and opportunities posed by the future of work. We will continue strengthening their institutional and human capacities, and we acknowledge that cooperation and exchange of knowledge and experiences, as well as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, are essential in this effort. For this reason, we will continue to strengthen and

actively participate in the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL), as the IACML's cooperation arm.

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

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

23. We join the commemoration of 2021 as the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor, and we will promote, in collaboration with other relevant institutions, policies aimed at eliminating child labor, as well as forced labor, and education and integrated social assistance policies, in order to achieve the social inclusion of children and adolescents.

24. We reaffirm our commitment to respect and protect the human and labor rights of migrant worker. Therefore, we will redouble efforts to achieve comprehensive labor migration policies.

THEREFORE, WE RESOLVE:

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

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

- i. Working Group 1: **Integrated public policies to address the COVID-19 crisis and achieve a future of work with equity and social justice.**
- ii. Working Group 2: **Institutional strengthening and social dialogue to protect workers' and employers' rights in light of the COVID-19 crisis and address emerging changes in the world of work**

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

4. To acknowledge with gratitude the contributions made by the following international organizations and specialized organs of the Organization of American States (OAS) that work unremittingly with the IACML: the International Labor Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Inter-American Conference on Social Security (CISS), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank (WB), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the Organization for

Cooperation and Economic Development (OECD), as well as the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), the Inter-American Commission on Education (CIE), and the Commission on Migration Affairs (CAM). Accordingly, we call for continued coordination, support and regional dialogue with those organizations.

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

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

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

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