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Inter-American Council for Integral Development
(CIDI)



**PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE
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PRELIMINARY DRAFT PLAN OF ACTION OF BUENOS AIRES

(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), gathered on September 22, 23 and 24, 2021, commit to carry out the following Plan of Action in order to implement the Declaration of Buenos Aires and continue advancing 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.

A. ORGANIZATION

2. In order to ensure the continuity and coherence of the IACML’s work, the Chair *Pro Tempore* of the XX IACML (Argentina) - in collaboration with the previous Chair (Barbados) and future Chair, with the support of the OAS Executive Secretariat for Integral Development and in consultation with the representatives of the Trade Union Technical Advisory Council (COSATE), and of the Business Technical Advisory Committee on Labor Matters (CEATAL) – will be responsible for advancing the implementation of this Plan of Action and continue the collaboration with the international organizations that contribute to the Conference.

3. The IACML takes note and will continue to implement the “General Guidelines for Sectoral Ministerial Processes within the framework of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI)” (CIDI/doc.228/17), approved by the OAS General Assembly in 2017.

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.

B. RESOURCES

4. Member states will devote the appropriate economic, technical, and logistic resources, as available, for the execution of this Plan of Action, with the participation of COSATE and CEATAL, and favoring the use of information and communication technologies. In addition, the Chair Pro Tempore will invite the relevant international organizations to make voluntary contributions to support the activities and projects included in this Plan, as well as to facilitate the participation of the said workers' and employers' organizations.

C. WORKING GROUPS

5. The following two working groups will be set up by representatives of the ministries of labor in order to advise the IACML regarding the objectives of the Declaration of Buenos Aires. As such, the Groups 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:

- i. Working Group 1 (WG1): Integrated public policies to address the COVID-19 crisis and achieve a future of work with equity and social justice; and
- ii. Working Group 2 (WG2): 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.

WORKING GROUP 1 (WG1): INTEGRATED PUBLIC POLICIES TO ADDRESS THE COVID-19 CRISIS AND ACHIEVE A FUTURE OF WORK WITH EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

6. WG1 will follow up on the following topics from the Declaration of Buenos Aires:

- future of work with equity, inclusion, and social justice;
- work on digital platforms, telework and new forms of employment;
- coordination of the economy, education, health and labor to overcome the effects of the crisis;
- equality in the labor market, elimination of all forms of employment discrimination, and labor inclusion of vulnerable populations;
- coordination among education, professional training, and employment; qualification frameworks; and development of skills for the future;
- training, reskilling, and public employment services to address the effects of the crisis;
- labor market information systems and prospective analysis for the identification of emerging and dynamic sectors for employment creation;
- sustainable enterprises, including micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, cooperatives and social economy enterprises, among others;
- transition from the informal to the formal economy;
- gender equality and gender mainstreaming in labor and employment policies; and
- combat violence and harassment in the world of work

7. Working Group 1 will facilitate analysis and exchanges of experiences and will develop recommendations to support governments through the following objectives and activities:

- a,1) NEW: Deepen interaction and coordination with the Ministries of Economy and Finance to achieve socioeconomic and employment recovery guaranteeing decent work and sustainable enterprises; reduce informality and labor precarization; and build a future of work with equity and social justice.
- a) Promote spaces for intersectoral and social dialogue to address work on digital platforms, telework and work from home, including the design and implementation of mechanisms, legislation, and policies to ensure equity and decent work, and clearly define and promote the respect of rights and responsibilities of workers and employers. Generate greater knowledge, information, and statistics on these phenomena, with the aim of having informed and evidence-based policymaking.
- b) In coordination with other institutions, improve professional training and reskilling for people to transition into new economic sectors considering the decrease in employment in some sectors due to technological change, climate change, and the effects of the pandemic. This action will entail: improving the quality, pertinence, and inclusion of training; strengthen, update, and expand the competency certification systems and employment services; establish training and transition paths among sectors; and deepen the use of technology to enable and expand training; among others.
- c) Deepen the exchange of information, knowledge, and experiences on the identification and development of skills for the future, emphasizing on foundational and transferable skills, including digital and socio-emotional skills. Strengthen youth employment strategies as well as training for the most vulnerable populations with this approach on skills for the future.
- d) Continue strengthening dialogue and cooperation among Ministries of Labor, Ministries of Education and Professional Training Institutions through the IACML and the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE), with the aim of achieving better coordination between education, training, and employment policies, as well as work towards developing a learning and skills development ecosystem.
- e) In coordination with other institutions, strengthen and enhance the updating of labor market information systems to have reliable and timely information on the current and future needs of the labor market, as well as provide timely figures on the dynamics of the labor market with the objective of enhance the use of data for the formulation of public policies, and provide feedback to the education and professional training strategies based on this information. Improve the capacity of information systems to generate analysis and prospective studies, use traditional and non-traditional information sources (take advantage of big data technologies), identify skills gaps and emerging sectors, and anticipate changes in the skills and competences required by the productive sector.

- f) Encourage ILO-CINTERFOR, OAS and UNESCO to continue working jointly in the development of a Regional Qualifications Framework at the level of the Americas to guide the design and implementation of national qualification frameworks.
- f,bis) NEW: Contribute to the design and implementation of productive recovery policies that promote the creation and development of sustainable enterprises, providing special attention to the promotion of micro and small enterprises, cooperatives and enterprises of the social economy. Enhance regional integration and decent work in value chains.
- g) Continue deepening the institutionalization of gender in the Ministries of Labor as a means to achieve gender equality. This involves institutional strengthening of gender units; bolstering the relationship with the mechanisms for the advancement of women; and continue to deepen training and cooperation among Ministries in this regard through the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL) and in partnership with the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM).
- h) Promote full participation of women in the labor market and productive activities including eliminate barriers to their effective participation such as unequal distribution of caregiving responsibilities, discrimination, violence, and harassment in the workplace. Ensure the incorporation of a gender approach in telework and work from home regulations and promote caregiving co-responsibility for unpaid work to achieve recovery with equality.
- i) Ensure access of vulnerable persons and groups to the labor market in conditions of equality and full compliance with their labor rights, aware that they have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Promote collaborative work among Ministries of Labor, other public institutions, and civil society organizations that serve these groups; inform and sensitize the general population on topics of inclusion and non-discrimination; improve access of groups that face the greatest challenges at work to education and training systems; and promote the creation and strengthening of inclusive enterprises.

WORKING GROUP 2 (WG2): 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.

- 8. WG2 will follow up on the following topics of the Declaration of Buenos Aires:
 - Strengthening and modernization of the Ministries of Labor to address both the emerging shifts in the world of work and the effects of the pandemic;
 - enforcement of labor legislation and regulation, and effective exercise of fundamental principles and rights at work;
 - strengthening of institutionalized social dialogue for the construction of more just, equitable, and resilient societies;
 - freedom of association and collective bargaining;

- regular, safe and orderly labor mobility;
- prevention and eradication of child labor;
- elimination of all forms of forced and mandatory work
- universal social protection for an equitable recovery;
- occupational health and safety and the right to health at work; and
- strengthening the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL)

9. Working Group 2 will facilitate analysis and exchanges of experience and will develop recommendations to support governments through the following objectives and activities:

- a) Strengthen mechanisms and bodies to achieve an institutionalized and cross-cutting social dialogue in the process of policy formulation for creating a “new normal” that builds fairer, more equitable, and resilient societies.
- b) Develop and implement, in a tripartite manner and with the contribution of social dialogue, strategies that reinforce the right to health at work and occupational health and safety management in the “new normal,” as well as promote a preventive approach that includes awareness and education campaigns.
- c) Consolidate and develop permanent inter-sectoral communication and coordination mechanisms that continue to address the most pressing labor issues in the new normal, such as occupational health and safety, labor inspection, and labor migration.
- d) Strengthen labor inspection as one of the central institutions for safeguarding the health and safety of workers and guaranteeing compliance with labor legislation in both urban and rural areas. Provide the necessary training and resources to inspectors, accelerate the implementation of technological tools to streamline and make their work more effective, and provide the necessary tools to address the most vulnerable populations. Design support programs to include a preventive approach for labor inspection, through information campaigns and innovative strategies.
- e) Continue to develop and promote alternative labor dispute resolution mechanisms, especially labor mediation and conciliation, as effective methods to avoid and/or resolve conflicts, achieve compliance with labor legislation, ensure respect for workers' rights, discourage recidivism of labor infractions, and decongest the judicial system.
- f) In coordination with relevant institutions, accelerate and deepen the efforts made during the pandemic to increase both contributory and non-contributory social protection coverage and move towards universal social protection, recognizing that it is an integral strategy to combat inequality and build fairer, more equitable, and resilient societies.
- g) In coordination with other relevant institutions, continue the development of programs and strategies that address the problem of child labor from an

intersectoral approach, both horizontally among the Ministries involved, as well as vertically with local authorities. Strengthen and adapt existing programs to prevent children and adolescents from entering child labor due to the pandemic. Continue and strengthen the implementation of programs, in coordination with the private sector and workers' and civil society organizations to guarantee value chains free of child labor and develop initiatives or alliances to provide accurate qualitative and quantitative information on the presence or risk of child labor in order to redirect efforts to the areas of greatest risk. Periodically update the lists of hazardous occupations where adolescents are employed. Promote programs to strengthen the skills and the labor inclusion of parents of children and adolescents in situation of child labor.

- h) Ensure, in conjunction with migration and consular authorities, and workers' and employers' organizations, compliance with the human and labor rights of migrant workers in the region through information strategies on their labor rights, conducting and strengthening labor inspections to provide comprehensive care to this population, including targeted inspections, and campaigns focused on combating discrimination and xenophobia. Continue the development of programs aimed at the labor inclusion of migrant workers, including formalization strategies adapting and integrating employment services to serve them.
- i) Promote the process of digital transformation of the Ministries of Labor and continue deepening the efforts made to digitize their services as an axis of institutional strengthening that facilitates better service to workers, workers' and employers' organizations, and the general public.
- j) Continue strengthening the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL) as a vehicle to strengthen the human and institutional capacities of the Ministries of Labor and contribute to the recovery process and the construction of a "new and better normal".

D. DIRECTIVES FOR THE FUNCTIONING OF THE WORKING GROUPS

10. The Working Groups will be coordinated by the following Ministers of Labor, elected by this Conference, who can perform the functions assigned either directly or through a representative:

- i. Working Group 1: Ministers of Labor of *** (Chair), *** (Vice Chair), and *** (Vice Chair).
- ii. Working Group 2: Ministers of Labor of *** (Chair), *** (Vice Chair), and *** (Vice Chair).

11. Participation in the Working Groups will be open to all the member states, to COSATE and CEATAL, and to the international organizations with competence over each group's topics.

12. The IACML instructs the OAS Executive Secretariat for Integral Development to continue acting as Technical Secretariat of the IACML and its working groups, and, as such, to provide guidance to

Member States to enable compliance of the mandates of the Declaration and Plan of Action of Buenos Aires; prepare technical inputs; support the preparation and organization of meetings, the preparation of reports, and follow-up.

13. The Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Working Groups, together with the Troika (the current, previous and future Chairs of the IACML), and with the participation of COSATE, CEATAL and relevant international organizations, will hold a planning meeting to define a calendar of activities for the implementation of this Plan no later than December 2021, which will include at least one meeting of the Working Groups before the XXII IACML, as well as cooperation and training activities within the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL).

E. INTER-AMERICAN NETWORK FOR LABOR ADMINISTRATION (RIAL)

14. In relation to the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL), the IACML determines:

- i. To renew its full support and commitment to the RIAL, recognizing that, since it was created at the XIV IACML in 2005, it has achieved significant results in strengthening the institutional and human capacities of the ministries of labor in the region.
- ii. To promote the financial sustainability of the RIAL and encourage the ministries of labor to make contributions to its Voluntary Contribution Fund, in accordance with its guidelines and subject to national capacities.
- iii. To celebrate the RIAL's rapid response to the pandemic through the publication of the Portfolio of Responses from Ministries of Labor to COVID-19 and the Repository of Guides and Protocols for deconfinement and return to work; as well as the undertaking of virtual bilateral cooperation activities, hemispheric dialogues and training activities, including the Course on gender-based violence at work, through the Educational Portal of the Americas.
- iv. To instruct the Technical Secretariat to continue coordinating the activities of the RIAL, in accordance with the priorities defined by the IACML, while working for the broader participation of its members. It will also explore possible additional sources of funding for its operations.

15. The RIAL will pursue the following actions:

- Include new programs and ensure the permanent update of the Portfolio of Programs, which includes initiatives on all areas of labor administration.
- Select, coordinate, follow up and evaluate the impact of technical bilateral cooperation activities;
- Continue expanding the use of information and communications technologies in its cooperation activities, including webinars, on-line discussion fora and videoconferencing, to maximize the use of resources;

- Organize technical workshops that complement the WG meetings in further analyzing specific priority areas, in partnership with other organizations; and
- Continue to publish periodically the RIAL newsletters and update its web page.

16. The Ministries of Labor agree to make every effort to ensure the effective operation of the RIAL, including designating focal points to serve as links between each ministry and the Network; making technical contributions; providing regular information to the Technical Secretariat on its operations, authorities, news highlights, and programs; and the continued participation of its officers in the RIAL actions.