Dialogue of civil society, workers and private sector with Heads of Delegation
June 19, 2017

Message from workers’ representatives in the segment of: Integral development and hemispheric prosperity

The trade-union movement of the Americas, represented by its continental organization, the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA) and the Trade Union Technical Advisory Council (COSATE), is grateful for the opportunity presented in this dialogue with the Heads of Delegation, the Secretary General, and the Assistant Secretary General, to present our opinions on the themes of these sessions.

We affirm our permanent vocation for participation and social dialogue in order to contribute to the well-being of a region in which peace and democracy, the full observance of universal human rights respecting the sovereignty and self-determination of peoples, and respect for National sovereignty must prevail.

As we have argued in our Development Platform of the Americas (PLADA), a paradigm shift is urgently needed, linking economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection in a comprehensive, articulated and coherent vision, and requiring a new relationship between State, society and the market, with an effective popular participation of the workers, the young, the women and the various social movements and organizations.

Sustainable development - within the framework of the 2030 Agenda - requires democratic processes based on the rule of law, committed to human, labor and social rights. We are facing a low growth economy for most countries in the region. Even in cases with recovery glimpses, the most disadvantaged sectors are not included, affecting their rights in practice.

The phase of neoliberal globalization and financialization increase inequalities in the world. G20 leaders in Pittsburgh (2009) and successive summits called to "turn the page on an era of irresponsibility and adopt a set of policies, regulations and reforms to meet the needs of the 21st century global economy" and in consonance they proposed "to strengthen the regulation of the International Financial System".

In this line, we propose a regulatory framework that will reframe and penalize offshore financial systems, as expressed by the trade union movement, and reinforced by ECLAC, at the Addis Ababa Conference on Financing for Development (UN, 2015). The OAS member states are committed to improving the equity, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of their tax systems through modernized and progressive control.

Structural adjustment policies in response to this new cycle of crisis have deepened the gap in income distribution with the consequences of greater poverty, informality and exclusion. They have favored the unjust appropriation of income and the concentration of wealth, and opened the door not only to new debt and investment crises, but to weakening democracies by calling into question their usefulness in the pursuit of social justice and decent work for all.
Strategies that promote new free trade agreements often worsen the socio-labor conditions of the countries involved, particularly of weaker or peripheral countries; just as the Investment Promotion and Protection Treaties (TPPI) complement this architecture as the great threat of corporate power against the sovereignty of nations.

We defend a concept of development that is not only economic, but also socially and environmentally sustainable, that does not aim at profit and revenue, but also at preserving the planet for future generations, allowing developing countries a fair transition towards a low carbon economy, recognizing the active and democratic role of the State.

The trade union movement has celebrated the adoption of Agenda 2030, whose fundamental rubric is "to leave no one behind" conceiving it as an integral and indivisible plan of action against exclusion that elevates the well-being of our peoples against hunger, poverty and Inequality in all its forms, through a productive model with decent work, and an inclusive infrastructure and industrialization program.

The combination of a recessionary economy, whose crises are staggering, punishes Latin America and the Caribbean, both in the reduction of commodity prices and in international trade with a lack of demand and excess liquidity. This combination of factors leads to the entrance of speculative and short-term capital in the region, which does not mean welfare and prosperity for society, but a greater concentration of wealth and unsustainable external indebtedness.

It has been established in all speeches of international organizations that the retraction of the economy and the need to restrict public spending is achieved by re-emphasizing the preponderance of the private sector as an efficient reallocator of resources and guarantor of the capitalist economy and adjustments by the states.

The privatization paradigm, evidenced in its falsity after the recurring crises of the 1990s, is reconverted into the Private Public Partnerships (PPP) paradigm, presented as "innovative" and more efficient form of development and cooperation. The trade union movement of the Americas denounces these modalities for the development of investments, and in particular of infrastructure, which must always have the State as the protagonist, regulator, and as the political instrument for the redistribution of wealth and for the preservation of national resources, keeping always employment and equity at the center of public policies.

As stated in the last Congress of TUCA, the State has to be the protagonist and guarantor in the design, implementation and evaluation of development policies, based on the priorities expressed democratically by its population. We defend development financing systems that are respectful of the democratic sovereignty of states and based on the mobilization of domestic resources, through progressive fiscal reforms, labor formalization policies, strengthening wage and social protection policies, as well as collective bargaining and social dialogue mechanisms.

Sabiendo que todos los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sustentables (ODS) expresan una visión integral de desarrollo y están interrelacionados, el movimiento sindical considera especialmente relevantes los objetivos vinculados a: poner fin a la pobreza en todas sus formas (ODS 1), inclusive a través de “sistemas y medidas apropiadas de protección social para todos” (meta 1.3);
Knowing that all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) express an integral vision of development and are interrelated, the trade union movement considers particularly relevant the objective related to: end poverty in all its forms (SDG 1), including through "appropriate social protection systems and measures for all" (target 1.3);

Our continent has grown in the last decade but it still is the most unequal region on the planet. States have committed themselves in the 2030 Agenda to reduce inequality (SDG 10) in all its dimensions and that requires to implement policies for effective equality between women and men. Such equality must begin with a precise and executive commitment to reduce the rate of femicide in our region. Without gender policies to end all forms of discrimination and violence, respect free choice of sexual identity, and promote the full and effective participation of women and equal opportunities (SDG 5, target 5.5), as well as universal access to sexual health and reproductive rights, our region will not be able to achieve gender equality.

Equally essential are the 2030 Agenda commitments concerning the world of work (SDG 8), where all states are committed to "achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value" by 2030 (target 8.5), as well as to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced and child labor in all its forms (target 8.7).

The OAS seeks a comprehensive vision of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, as evidenced by the creation of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI). This is why this Assembly should commit to formulate policies consistent with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and develop a monitoring mechanism with the participation of our organizations. In this sense, we call for the strengthening of the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI), which is in charge of the OAS development agenda.

The OAS, while respecting the diversity of political, cultural, ethnic and racial expressions of the nations that comprise it, and affirming a tolerant coexistence between different political and ideological projects and democratic models, must continue to promote regional consensus. We, therefore, support and celebrate the processes of political dialogue that the SEDI of the OAS advances, such as the inter-american conferences of ministers of labor and education, among others. The regional consensus reached at these ministerial conferences reflects regional priorities and actions on the most important development issues in the region and should convey coherence and influence to other international agencies, especially development banks such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

The OAS must deepen its role of facilitator and coordinator of horizontal cooperation between governments, by sharing experiences and knowledge. An example of these actions for the world of work is the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL). We believe that this is a role that the OAS performs well and is, in addition, intrinsic to its nature.

Finally, the trade union movement calls for a reaffirmation of the commitment to the Regional Initiative Latin American and Caribbean Free of Child Labor and the approval of a road map at the Fourth World Conference on the Eradication of Child Labor with concrete and effective measures, as well as to eliminate forced labor and protect youth employment, all fundamental challenges for the future.