



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



**FIFTH MEETING OF MINISTERS AND  
HIGH-LEVEL AUTHORITIES OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

November 17 and 18, 2022  
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**FINAL REPORT OF THE FIFTH MEETING OF MINISTERS AND HIGH-LEVEL  
AUTHORITIES OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (V REMDES)**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The Fifth Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of Social Development (V REMDES), was held in person on November 17 and 18, 2022, in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, after the country had offered to host the event at the Fourth REMDES in Guatemala in 2019.

The preparatory process for the Fifth REMDES involved the active participation of the Inter-American Committee on Social Development (CIDES) and its Working Groups, the Troika, and the OAS member states as a whole through the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI), who selected the theme of the meeting—“Strengthening Hemispheric Cooperation towards Resilient Reconstruction and Sustainable Social Development in the Americas”—and the issues that would be prioritized for discussion at the ministerial meeting. In addition, between June and November 2022, nine informal meetings were held to negotiate the meeting’s key documents—the Draft Inter-American Declaration on Social Development Priorities and the Draft Plan of Action of the Dominican Republic 2022—along with one formal preparatory meeting, held virtually on October 20, 2022. Thus, the topics considered and documents adopted reflect the diverse views expressed by the authorities of the social development ministerial process and by the other OAS member states.

The fifth triennial ministerial meeting on social development was an event of great importance that addressed high-priority issues for the region’s integral development, such as multidimensional poverty and inequality, social protection and the labor market, the provision of care, and special consideration for vulnerable population groups. The topics discussed at the meeting are essential for making decisive progress in the development of innovative social policies in line with today’s complex circumstances and offer a unique opportunity to bring together those responsible for the crucial task of formulating and implementing social policies to discuss, above and beyond national priorities, how our countries can work together to address common challenges and build collective solutions.

**II. PARTICIPANTS**

The meeting was attended by social development ministers and high-level authorities from 23 OAS member states. The list of participants can be seen at the following link: [List of Participants, Fifth REMDES, OAS](#).

### III. PROCEEDINGS

The ministerial meeting had simultaneous interpreting between the four official OAS languages (English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish) and, in accordance with Article 20 of the Rules of Procedure for Sectoral and Specialized Meetings of Ministers and/or High Authorities in the framework of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development,<sup>1</sup> consisted of an inaugural session, four plenary sessions, and a closing session. The discussions that took place at those sessions are summarized below.

Most of the thematic sessions began with presentations by experts in the field—academics and representatives of international organizations—who provided updated technical analyses of the topics at hand. Then, ministers and high-level authorities from the participating countries shared their experiences and promising practices with the topics addressed at the plenary sessions, identifying lessons learned and implementation challenges faced. This was followed by an opportunity for dialogue during which the authorities were able to exchange ideas, comments, and viewpoints on the topic under discussion.

#### A. Inaugural session

The inaugural session heard from Ms. Maricarmen Plata, Secretary for Access to Rights and Equity, representing the OAS; Mr. Francisco Antonio Peña Guaba, General Coordinator of the Social Policy Coordination Cabinet of the Presidency of the Dominican Republic; and Mr. Luis Abinader, President of the Dominican Republic, in his capacity as the host of the Fifth REMDES.

In her remarks, Secretary Plata said that this ministerial meeting offered a vitally important opportunity for the region to reflect on social challenges and propose joint actions to help overcome them. She also noted that current demands confirmed the limitations of conventional social policy focused on the residual effects of economic policy, which pointed to the need for a renewed social contract: one that required—perhaps as never before in recent history—a solidarity-based partnership among the member states, as promoted at this meeting and in the lines of action derived from it.

In turn, Coordinator Peña Guaba outlined the important efforts undertaken by the Dominican Government in response to the health crisis, highlighting the key role played by social development institutions in providing protection, especially for the most vulnerable; and he shared some of the measures that had allowed it to be one of the countries with the best results in terms of care and socioeconomic recovery, through the use of ICTs, and to move toward greater adaptability and resilience of the social protection system in crisis situations. He also emphasized the value of this type of OAS meeting, given that there are no individual solutions to the current crisis, but that strategies must necessarily be collective.

The inaugural session was brought to a close by the President of the Dominican Republic, Mr. Luis Abinader, who emphasized our region's privileged position as the first in the world to form

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1. **Article 20.** Each sectoral or specialized meeting of CIDI shall hold an inaugural session, the necessary plenary sessions, and a closing session. In addition, the Chair may convene a preparatory session, which shall be a closed session, when there are pending matters to be settled. Agreements reached during a preparatory session shall be formally adopted at the first plenary session of the meeting. In the case of a special meeting, the inaugural session may be omitted.

a regional organization to promote cooperation and dialogue without the constraints of culture, economic differences, or geographical demarcations: the OAS. The Organization, he said, promoted events of this kind with open and cooperative dialogue in order to exchange opportunities for improving social protection systems so that they can become truly agile policy instruments to contribute to recovery, fully understanding that the challenges must be addressed through a renewed multilateralism.

The audio recording of the inaugural session is available at the following link: [https://scm.oas.org/audios/2022/V-REMDES\\_0-Inaugural\\_11-17-2022.mp3](https://scm.oas.org/audios/2022/V-REMDES_0-Inaugural_11-17-2022.mp3).

#### B. First plenary session

At the opening of the session, on a motion from the head of the delegation of Chile and seconded by the head of the delegation of Guatemala, Mr. Francisco Antonio Peña Guaba, General Coordinator of the Social Policy Coordination Cabinet of the Dominican Republic, was elected by acclamation to serve as Chair of the Fifth Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of Social Development.

The meeting also agreed on the composition of the Style Committee: the delegation of Brazil for the Portuguese language, Canada for French, Guatemala for Spanish, and the United States for English. The draft agenda for the meeting was adopted without changes and, with regard to the designation of committees and working groups for the meeting, it was agreed that since no parallel work was foreseen, no subordinate bodies needed to be established.

The deadline for the presentation of proposals was agreed upon (12:00 noon on November 17, 2022), along with the duration of the meeting (to conclude at 5:15 p.m. on November 18, 2022), and the schedule for the ministerial meeting was approved.

The meeting then heard from Ambassador Yolande Smith, Chair of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI) and Permanent Representative of Grenada to the OAS, who shared some words of welcome in which she highlighted CIDI's role as the governing body of the social development ministerial process pursued by the OAS in its capacity as the main forum for political dialogue in the Americas. Ambassador Smith said that the Council's main mission was to promote cooperation among OAS member states to support their integral development. Through ministerial meetings, it sought to create an environment in which countries can identify regional trends and priorities, exchange experiences and promising practices in the design and implementation of public policies, develop opportunities for cooperation, and establish the OAS work agenda for the next three years in support of its member states, thereby reaffirming CIDI's commitment as a partner in the implementation of the Political Declarations adopted at the REMDES and their Plans of Action.

Then, the technical secretariat of the social development ministerial process, represented by Dr. Betilde Muñoz-Pogossian, Director of the Department of Social Inclusion (DSI/SARE, OAS), presented a report following up on the Fourth Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of Social Development (IV REMDES) and indicating the progress achieved in the execution of the 2019 Plan of Action of Guatemala and the main challenges its implementation faced in a context marked by the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Muñoz-Pogossian said that since the approval

of the CIDES Work Plan in April 2021, the two active Working Groups<sup>2</sup> had held regular meetings to prioritize and design activities to strengthen the technical capacities of the institutions in charge of social policies in the Americas, events that were made possible through the financial contributions of the Governments of Canada and the Dominican Republic, respectively. The report submitted by the technical secretariat can be downloaded [here](#).

As part of the activities promoted by CIDES, the “Compendium of Experiences and Lessons Learned from the Measurement of Multidimensional Poverty in the Americas,” prepared by CIDES Working Group 1 with the collaboration of the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and technical support from the Department of Social Inclusion (DSI/SARE, OAS), was officially launched.

The presentation was given by Mr. Hugues Vaillancourt, Director General of Employment and Social Development Canada, Vice Chair of Working Group 1, and Ms. Michelle Muschett, Senior Public Policy Advisor at OPHI. They explained the central content of this unprecedented publication, which brings together the experience of fourteen (14) countries of the Americas in formulating and implementing strategies to measure and address the multiple dimensions of poverty. In addition, OPHI technicians expanded the compendium with a regional contextualization of the current situation as regards multidimensional poverty and with recommendations for action that could be adopted to strengthen the methods used by governments to measure multidimensional poverty.

In her remarks, Ms. Muschett highlighted the intrinsic value of this unique publication for decision-makers and public policy-makers, especially because of the methodology adopted for its collective construction based on contributions from the countries containing reflections and reports on their individual experiences. This effort could therefore set an example for other regions of the world, by promoting the exchange of knowledge and lessons learned to close the technical capacity gaps in the region and to make effective progress toward the eradication of poverty. The compendium can be downloaded [in Spanish](#) and [in English](#).

The audio recording of the first plenary session is available at [https://scm.oas.org/audios/2022/V-REMDES\\_1-Plenaria\\_11-17-2022.mp3](https://scm.oas.org/audios/2022/V-REMDES_1-Plenaria_11-17-2022.mp3).

### C. Second plenary session

The second plenary session began with the presentation of the Report on Human Development 2021/2022—covering the global and regional levels and prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)—by Mr. Sócrates Barinas, a senior economist with the

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2. **Working Group 1: “Measurements of multidimensional poverty and the design of public policies intended to guarantee well-being and the enjoyment of a good quality of life.”** Chair: Secretariat of Well-being of Mexico; Vice Chair: Employment and Social Development Canada; other members: Ministry of Social Development of Guatemala, and Ministry of Social Development of Paraguay.  
**Working Group 2: “Social protection systems that lead to social development, through the reduction of poverty and inequality, and expand social protection with a comprehensive approach.”** Chair: Social Policy Coordination Cabinet of the Dominican Republic; Vice Chair: Ministry of Human Development and Social Inclusion of Costa Rica; other members: Ministry of Social Development of Guatemala, Ministry of Social Development of Paraguay, Ministry of Social Development and Inclusion of Peru, Ministry of Social Development of Uruguay, and Ministry of Social Development of Argentina.

UNDP, and Ms. Melisa Bretón, a UNDP human development officer. They placed the current socioeconomic situation facing the Americas in context, highlighting the main common challenges and possibilities for joint action to overcome poverty and inequalities following the health crisis.

The meeting then addressed the topic **“Social protection systems in the region in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic,”** which was structured around five (5) subtopics. The first subtopic, **“Adaptive and resilient social protection for management and mitigation of risks in the event of emergencies and socioenvironmental disasters,”** featured a presentation of the Jamaican experience by Ms. Suzette Morris, Director of Social Security at the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of Jamaica. She spoke about the response strategies to the COVID-19 pandemic deployed by the Jamaican social security system, in a context of a severe impact to its economy following the substantial drop in tourism as a key component of its GDP. The Jamaican social protection system uses a multisectoral, multifaceted, and multidimensional approach, with the participation of the government, the private sector, civil society, and international partners; and she described how her country has been advancing in the development of increasingly adaptive and resilient systems, with the objective of increasing the efficiency of social programs to face and reduce current risks, thereby reducing social vulnerability to long-term threats. She also identified certain areas that must be further strengthened in order to effectively achieve this objective—such as progress with social information systems, which play a fundamental role in prevention and implementation—and to reduce gaps in access to social benefits.

In that regard, the member states have placed particular emphasis on the fact that the coordination of social protection policies and measures for mitigating and adapting to health and environmental challenges can help reduce the risks to which vulnerable population groups and the most vulnerable regions—especially the Caribbean—are most exposed.

The second subtopic examined the **“Sustainability of social protection systems,”** with presentations from four countries that shared their experiences in this area. The first presentation was given by Ms. Miranda Lynch-Smith, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Services Policy at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, who set out three approaches and courses of action that her country had implemented to sustain its social protection net and adapt the way in which social programs support communities during crises. She drew particular attention to its risk prevention services, such as the Medicaid program, child care services, and nutritional assistance, which reduced poverty and improved social inclusion and health outcomes.

Referring to certain lessons learned, she noted that the effectiveness of preventive services required permanent funding streams, rather than one-off allocations. Beneficiaries and communities are reluctant to make the investments required to ensure effective services if long-term financing is not guaranteed. Accordingly, measuring program effectiveness requires analytical, technological, and research investments to improve data collection, standardization, and program quality; however, monitoring and evaluation are often not included and require an additional investment over and above from program funds.

Then, Mr. Esteban Bernal, Minister of Economic and Social Inclusion of Ecuador, presented some of the progress made and challenges faced by Ecuador’s socioeconomic policy in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. He spoke of the increased social investment made by his country to meet the new socioeconomic challenges and outlined some effective responses provided by the government. These included: the launch of the *Impulso Violeta* productive project in response to the

increase in economic gender inequality; the strengthening of human development loans; and the organization of employability and entrepreneurship fairs. The need to strengthen the cash transfer system was identified, and a minimum basic consumption floor for vulnerable families was guaranteed through the *Infancia Futuro* voucher and nutritional programs; and protection was extended to people forced to move as a result of pandemic-induced displacements with the creation of Temporary Human Mobility Attention Centers, which provide a range of services including humanitarian and psychosocial care and legal advice.

Then, Ms. Rean Gibson, a research analyst at the Ministry of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs of Barbados, said that achieving sustainable social protection systems required a radical transformation in the approaches adopted in order to transform lives. The necessary approaches would ensure three key pillars for sustainability: funding, sustainable program development (through safety nets that can effectively reduce poverty by improving the beneficiaries' quality of life and livelihoods), and the adaptability and resilience of systems to respond to events that affect people's lives.

Finally, a pre-recorded presentation was given by Ms. Karina Gould, Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development of Canada, who said that strong social protection systems were the key to our countries' economic and social sustainability. Canada's social protection system has a "stability" component built into its design, which includes income security programs as well as social insurance schemes, childhood supports, provisions governing working ages and retirement ages, and so on. This system has been able to adapt in times of need and, overall, this has resulted in a system that is sustainable for the government in terms of its financing and sustainable for citizens in terms of its usefulness.

The comments offered by the participating authorities indicated how crises and disasters can be transformed into opportunities to build innovative solutions and improve the effectiveness and sustainability of social protection systems. In that undertaking, both political will and financing were highlighted as crucial factors for the construction of a crisis-responsive protection matrix. To that end, progress must be made with the necessary fiscal reforms and progressive taxation systems, and with the expansion of multilateral financing and external debt relief measures.

In dealing with the third subtopic, **"Innovations through the incorporation of new technology to address current social problems,"** Mr. Renato González Disla, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Advisor of the Social Policy Coordination Cabinet of the Dominican Republic, participated as a guest expert to share his country's experience in this area. He first outlined how the fourth industrial revolution has impacted social protection and then identified a number of challenges: the widening gap in the division of labor between humans and machines, the creation of fewer jobs to replace those that are lost, and the slow post-COVID recovery of economies. He also emphasized certain opportunities offered by the current digital transformation in meeting those challenges, through innovation strategies and the creation of new jobs (telework, virtual education, promotion of the gig economy<sup>3</sup> and the collaborative economy). Thus, the digital transformation has been extremely useful for improving the management of social protection

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3. The gig economy refers to a new format for generating income outside of the traditional idea of work whereby a person performs a specific task and charges for the service independently. IDB (2022), Available at: <https://blogs.iadb.org/trabajo/es/gig-economy-el-nuevo-paradigma-para-la-generacion-de-ingresos/>.

policies, in that it has facilitated process integration and data interoperability for the administration of services and beneficiaries.

He also explained how the incorporation of technological advances has strengthened the work of the Dominican Republic's Social Subsidy Administrative Agency, enabling it to provide a prompt response to the demands arising from the COVID-19 crisis with a broad coverage of access and the identification of particularly vulnerable population groups.

In turn, Mr. Giorgio Jackson, Minister of Social Development and the Family of Chile, stated that the current "digital ecosystem" was an essential tool for the development and effectiveness of social policies, in that it streamlined management and improved beneficiaries' experiences. Accordingly, in 2019 his country enacted a Digital Transformation Law that modifies the basis for administrative processes. A process of preparing the institutions for its implementation was currently underway, and common standards were being established for integrated and interoperable electronic platforms and the digitization of administrative processes through a single window that avoids the duplication of records and facilitates intersectoral coordination, thereby improving the management of public investment.

The authorities participating in the exchange expressed great interest in the experiences shared, which they described as promising practices that could be replicated and adapted to individual national contexts. They also noted how the recent health crisis had impacted the way governments manage their social protection policies, encouraging them to use digital technologies to streamline access to benefits and facilitate the cross-referencing of information between public institutions for timely decision-making. However, the digital divides present in our region had to be taken into consideration in order to take advantage of the potential of ICTs to accelerate human progress and build a digitally inclusive future.

The meeting then turned its attention to the fourth subtopic, **"Perspectives on Universal Basic Income: Opportunities and challenges for its implementation,"** which was introduced by Mr. Joachim Henry, Minister of Equity, Social Justice, and Empowerment of Saint Lucia. He explained how his country—despite the challenges and limitations of available resources—had made progress with updating its National Social Protection Policy in the direction of a system capable of adapting to multiple environmental, health, and economic shocks, equipped with clearly established protocols, implementation agreements, and institutionalized processes that go beyond *ad hoc* responses. He also noted how the economic support measures provided to the population through monetary transfers had made it possible to guarantee the public minimum levels of social protection, in the understanding that unconditional emergency assistance is an urgent, fair, and feasible way to prevent the pandemic from causing further impoverishment.

The meeting agreed that economic transfer policy schemes do not reverse economic recessions in countries, nor do they replace social protection systems; they do, however, have the potential to mitigate the most severe immediate effects of crises and disasters.

To address the fifth subtopic, **"International migration-sensitive policies as part of social protection systems: a preventive approach to irregular migration and social reintegration opportunities for returning migrants,"** Mr. Tim Howe, a senior regional migrant protection and assistance specialist with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), gave a pre-recorded video presentation on the Regional Guidelines for the Social Inclusion of Survivors of Trafficking in

Persons in the Americas, prepared by the Department of Social Inclusion of the OAS and the IOM. Those guidelines are intended as a non-binding source of orientation on actions and areas of intervention that should be present in the planning and implementation of strategies to facilitate the social inclusion of trafficking survivors and their active participation in the communities where they reside. In the Political Declaration adopted at this meeting, the OAS member states took note of the Guidelines and committed themselves—through the 2022 Plan of Action of the Dominican Republic—to create mechanisms for disseminating and socializing them.

On this issue, the delegation of Brazil indicated that its country's social protection policy was not limited to Brazilian nationals; one example of this was its *Operação Acolhida* ("Operation Welcome)," which seeks to guarantee humanitarian assistance to Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Brazilian territory. The delegation of Guatemala also underscored its country's commitment to the shared responsibility required in dealing with migration, and it highlighted its National Alternative Education Program (PRONEA), the purpose of which is to facilitate the accreditation and certification of studies carried out and/or labor skills acquired abroad, for the benefit of the general population, with an emphasis on migrants and returnees.

In turn, the representative of Panama emphasized the complex situation faced by her country due to the extraordinary migratory flow it has received in recent years, across what is considered one of the most dangerous migratory routes in the world. She also stressed the need to strengthen international cooperation from a perspective of shared responsibility and respect for human rights.

The meeting then examined the topic **"Labor market and social protection: productive-labor inclusion and promotion of formality, with an emphasis on access to social security, as strategies to reduce inequality and eradicate poverty."** Two introductory addresses were given by Mr. Ariel Pino, a social protection and occupational safety and health specialist with the International Labour Organization (ILO), and Ms. Gina Magnolia Riaño Barón, Secretary General of the Ibero-American Social Security Organization (OISS).

Mr. Pino described social protection as a driver of labor formalization in a regional context marked by informal employment conditions, poverty, and income inequalities. He said that the partial recovery of the employment rate after the COVID-19 crisis had been led by an increase in informal work; in view of that, the ILO recommended that states extend social protection coverage to encourage formalization and promote decent work as an essential mechanism for advancing towards greater social justice. To that end, he suggested certain concrete measures that countries could adopt, such as the design of taxes in line with workers' ability to contribute, the simplification of administrative procedures, and the organization of the informal sector through adequate representation to enable it to lobby and interact with public authorities.

The representative of the OISS agreed that the strengthening of social protection systems within the framework of recovery from the pandemic was a fundamental component of a new social compact centered on the population's comprehensive well-being, on the development of a new social security paradigm based on universal rights, adequate benefits, and sustainable systems, and on the establishment of a framework for employment and public policy that takes into account new labor dynamics and guarantees adequate conditions of protection. She thus noted that a sustainable reduction of informality required economic policies that promote economic growth, which implies transforming the productive structure by investing in knowledge, new technologies, and worker skills.



Next, Ms. Vindhya Persaud, Minister of Human Services and Social Security of Guyana, shared some promising practices implemented in her country to strengthen its social protection system, highlighting the achievements of productive labor inclusion programs and the promotion of formalization. These programs are universal in scope, with an emphasis on the most vulnerable populations, including people from the most remote communities in the country's interior; they facilitate free access to a broad portfolio of technical, professional, and certification training opportunities, as well as tools for the development of entrepreneurship, specifically designed for the market niches identified in Guyana. She also showcased the efforts made by the country to address the particular needs of lower-income women and of survivors of domestic violence, who are more severely affected by the informal nature of the jobs they are able to secure.

Ambassador María Roquebert León, Permanent Representative of Panama to the OAS, shared the experience of her country's Ministry of Social Development in implementing social protection programs linked to productive inclusion. In particular, she highlighted the Social Cohesion program as part of the Ministry's overall strategy for eradicating poverty, the aim of which is to improve the productive capacity of the population living in indigenous territories in order to increase their agricultural output and income generation, thereby bolstering their food security and nutritional standards. The program's recent impact evaluation reports a high degree of satisfaction among the beneficiaries (over 96%), who were able to access training opportunities in accordance with their needs, adopt new technologies to improve production yields, and expand their sales channels, along with other advantages.

In reference to this topic, Ms. Cielo Rusinque, Director of the Department of Social Prosperity of Colombia, said that her country's new government was working towards a new public policy approach aimed at overcoming poverty, eradicating hunger, and achieving "total peace," which involved strengthening strategic alliances between the government and social organizations against a backdrop shaped by historical inequality and new risks such as pandemics and climate change. She highlighted the efforts undertaken to address certain highly vulnerable sectors of the population, such as young people, older people, and low-income women. In Colombia, 75% of households in extreme poverty are headed by women; in response to this, monetary transfers have been made to mothers who head households in recognition of the work they do and their contributions to the care economy.

To deal with the meeting's text topic, **"Moving towards caring societies: challenges and lessons learned from comprehensive care systems in the region,"** the first presentation was given by Ms. Beatriz Piñeres, a specialist in economic empowerment with the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM). Following a process of analysis and consultation, the CIM launched the Inter-American Model Law on Care as a tool that aims to recognize care as a right and, therefore, the need to regulate it, to recognize, reduce, and redistribute the burden of care, and guarantee its universal access and enjoyment. The basis for creating this legal instrument was the determination that the region's existing regulatory instruments have been insufficient in comprehensively addressing the realities faced by women. In addition, the CIM has prepared an "Implementation Guide for the Inter-American Model Law on Care," which serves as a reference for those countries that are embarking on a regulatory process for caregiving and establishes certain minimum bases in terms of the regulatory and political adjustments required for that process.

The meeting then heard from Mr. José Carlos Cardona Erazo, Secretary of State in the Social Development Office (SEDESOL) of the Republic of Honduras, who spoke to share the experience of his country's Social Protection System and the challenges it has faced in incorporating the care approach into the new institutional architecture that SEDESOL is working on, toward a Comprehensive State Care Law.

Next, Mr. Nicolás Scarela, National Secretary for Care and Disabilities of the Ministry of Social Development of Uruguay, speaking through a pre-recorded video, shared a series of reflections on the design, implementation, and evaluation of Uruguay's National Integrated Care System as a pioneering experience in the region. He explained that since its creation in 2015, the system's effectiveness and progressiveness had been guaranteed by certain key elements: firstly, the system was created through a collective process involving the government, organized civil society, the private sector, and academia, where the perspectives and contributions of each sector were considered and offering formal channels for their active participation in decision-making; another key aspect was the "comprehensiveness" of the system, in that it covers all people at every stage of the life cycle, including benefits for both those who need care and those who provide it; finally, it emphasized the priority of recognizing care as a right protected by law, which requires constant monitoring and evaluation and a budget allocation in accordance with the system's objectives of progressiveness and universality.

During the discussion, the participating delegations agreed that investing in care and promoting joint responsibility among states, families, markets, and communities represents substantive progress towards gender equality, while at the same time boosting economic activity, creating formal jobs and quality professionals, and contributing to the transformation of traditional gender roles.

The audio recording of the second plenary session is available at [https://scm.oas.org/audios/2022/V-REMDES\\_2-Plenaria\\_11-17-2022.mp3](https://scm.oas.org/audios/2022/V-REMDES_2-Plenaria_11-17-2022.mp3).

#### D. Third plenary session

The central topic of the third plenary session was "Strengthening international and regional cooperation as a key to promoting equity and sustainability of social protection systems." First, Mr. Van Elder Espinal, Technical Director of the Social Policy Coordination Cabinet of the Dominican Republic, gave a presentation on "The Draft Plan of Action of the Dominican Republic as an opportunity to strengthen regional cooperation." He encouraged the member states, permanent observers, and special guests to actively involve themselves in the implementation of the objectives proposed in the plan and, to the extent of their possibilities, to make contributions to the specific voluntary contributions fund to guarantee the availability of the resources needed for its effective execution.

Director Espinal then opened a discussion with international organizations on "Opportunities for cooperation and synergies among regional organizations for strengthening social protection systems," which included valuable contributions from representatives of international organizations that are strategic partners in the OAS social development agenda, such as Ms. Michelle Muschett, representing the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI); Mr. Xavier Hernández, representing the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Mr. Pablo Bartol, representing the Andean Development Corporation (CAF); and Ms. Alison Drayton, representing the Caribbean

Community (CARICOM). In their presentations, the speakers described their organizations' work in support of social development institutions in the Americas, and they discussed possible strategies for joint action in the effective implementation of the Plan of Action adopted at this meeting.

The audio recording of the third plenary session is available at [https://scm.oas.org/audios/2022/V-REMDES\\_3-Plenaria\\_11-18-2022.mp3](https://scm.oas.org/audios/2022/V-REMDES_3-Plenaria_11-18-2022.mp3).

#### E. Fourth plenary session

The first item on this session's agenda was the election of the authorities of the Inter-American Committee on Social Development (CIDES) for the 2022-2025 period. Nominations were received and the elections were held by acclamation: the Minister of Social Development of Chile was elected to serve as Chair of CIDES, the Minister of Social Development of Paraguay to serve as First Vice Chair of CIDES, and the General Coordinator of the Social Policy Coordination Cabinet of the Dominican Republic to serve as Second Vice Chair of CIDES for the period from the Fifth REMDES until the next social development ministerial meeting in 2025.

In his capacity as chair-elect of CIDES, the Minister of Social Development of Chile stated that his government was taking on this great challenge with enthusiasm and was committed to pursuing actions to address the important shared challenges of the Americas with a perspective focused on gender and human rights. He also stressed the central importance of addressing the climate and ecological crisis, which were caused mostly by higher-income sectors but which had consequences that are suffered mainly by the vast majority of lower-income people. Those challenges, he said, are made more complex by the fact that we are the most unequal region in the world, but with the conviction that interconnections and shared drive can change that reality, the region could advance towards the comprehensive well-being of our populations without leaving anyone behind. The delegate of Paraguay expressed his gratitude for the trust placed in his country to continue as Vice Chair of the Committee, which reinforced his commitment to work hard so that poverty and inequalities could be jointly addressed as a central issue for regional development.

Then, in order to address the tasks agreed upon in the Plan of Action of the Dominican Republic 2022 and in keeping with the applicable regulations, the formal establishment of the CIDES Working Groups was approved. The Plan of Action provides for three working groups to implement the social development priorities defined in the Declaration adopted by the meeting. These are: Working Group 1 on "Measurements of multidimensional poverty and the design of public policies intended to guarantee well-being and the enjoyment of a good quality of life," Working Group 2 on "Social protection systems that lead to social development, through the reduction of poverty and inequality, and expand social protection with a comprehensive approach," and Working Group 3 on "Partnerships, funding, and strengthening hemispheric cooperation and technical assistance to promote social development through the Inter-American Social Protection Network (IASPN)."

As regards the authorities who will lead the Working Groups, although some member states were considering candidacies for the positions in the three groups, there were not enough candidates for all the vacant positions to allow for the election to be held at the Fifth REMDES; therefore, in keeping with the Rules of Procedure of the CIDI Inter-American Committees, the Inter-American Committee on Social Development (CIDES) will proceed to elect the authorities of the three Working Groups as soon as possible. Once this decision was agreed upon, the Action Plan was

amended by eliminating section 5, “Functioning of the Working Groups,” page 8 in the English version, where the elected authorities of the Working Groups were to be identified.

The meeting also decided to graciously accept the offer of the Government of Mexico to host the Sixth Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of Social Development (VI REMDES) in 2025. CIDI will therefore proceed to formally convene the meeting once the exact date and place are determined. The Chair of the meeting expressed his gratitude to the Government of Mexico, offered his assistance with the preparation of the next ministerial meeting, and welcomed the country as a member of the social development sectoral process Troika within the framework of CIDI. In turn, the Mexican Ambassador to the Dominican Republic highlighted the central role played by the OAS in the region, and he said that the Organization should continue to promote venues for dialogue where, through the REMDES, the states can prioritize the issues that need to be discussed multilaterally and find joint solutions to the new challenges afflicting our peoples, continuing the coordinated work toward the VI REMDES that his government is enthusiastically committed to host.

Moving on to the next item on the plenary session’s agenda, the meeting proceeded to consider and approve the “Inter-American Declaration on Social Development Priorities” (CIDI/REMDES/DEC. 1/22), which had been previously negotiated at nine (9) informal meetings and one formal preparatory meeting. In connection with this document, representatives of the delegations of Paraguay and Guatemala requested the inclusion of footnotes in the Declaration, expressing their disagreement with the reference to “women and girls in all their diversity.” The Technical Secretariat took note of the request of those two delegations and subsequently incorporated the footnote prepared by Guatemala, while the language to be proposed by Paraguay was still pending submission.

In addition, the Plan of Action of the Dominican Republic 2022 (CIDI/REMDES/doc.7/22 rev. 1) was considered and adopted by acclamation. In keeping with the approved Declaration and as established in CIDI’s three-year sectoral cycle, in the next three months the CIDES authorities and the Troika will meet to prepare the Draft CIDES Work Plan, which, based on the Plan of Action of the Dominican Republic, will be implemented over the next three years.

At the conclusion of the fourth plenary session, the Minister of Social Development and the Family of Chile proposed the draft resolution entitled “Vote of Thanks to the People and Government of the Dominican Republic” (CIDI/REMDES/RES. 1/22). The meeting approved the resolution by acclamation, recognizing that the hospitality of the people and the Dominican Government—through the President, the General Coordinator of the Social Policy Coordination Cabinet, and all their staff—had made it possible to hold the Fifth REMDES in Santo Domingo, where the delegations were able to engage in a fruitful and productive dialogue to continue seeking to improve the scope and effectiveness of measures to alleviate poverty and improve people’s well-being.

The audio recording of the fourth plenary session is available at [https://scm.oas.org/audios/2022/V-REMDES\\_4-Plenaria-Clausura\\_11-18-2022.mp3](https://scm.oas.org/audios/2022/V-REMDES_4-Plenaria-Clausura_11-18-2022.mp3).

#### J. Closing session

With the Fifth REMDES having completed its deliberations, Ambassador Nestor Mendez, Assistant Secretary General of the OAS, applauded the agreements and achievements that brought the meeting to a close. In particular, he thanked the Government of the Dominican Republic, Coordinator

Peña Guaba and his team, and the Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to the OAS for their exceptional leadership in the preparations for this ministerial meeting, and he also extended his gratitude to all the ministers and high-level authorities present.

He highlighted the ministerial meeting as an example of how the OAS—as the only inter-American entity with a structure and strategy in which the vast majority of the region’s states participate—can, in coordination with other institutions, make significant contributions to the Hemisphere’s social development. He also said that the meeting was a concrete example of the essential role of the Organization in facilitating venues for dialogue to build regional consensus and promote technical cooperation among peers, and he reaffirmed the OAS’s commitment to continue supporting, through the Secretariat for Access to Rights and Equity of the Department of Social Inclusion, the efforts of the institutions in charge of the Hemisphere’s social policies, thereby contributing to the implementation of the lines of work set forth in the Plan of Action so that they can translate into concrete improvements in the quality of life of all people.

In turn, Mr. Francisco Antonio Peña Guaba, General Coordinator of the Social Policy Coordination Cabinet of the Dominican Republic, in his capacity as Chair of the Fifth REMDES, thanked the participants, speakers, and member states for their active engagement and expressed his country’s satisfaction with the results achieved. He also thanked the delegations for their cooperation and commitment, and the OAS Technical Secretariat staff for the support and guidance they had given the local team, before declaring the meeting closed.

The audio recording of the closing session is available at [https://scm.oas.org/audios/2022/V-REMDES\\_4-Plenaria-Clausura\\_11-18-2022.mp3](https://scm.oas.org/audios/2022/V-REMDES_4-Plenaria-Clausura_11-18-2022.mp3).

The list of the meeting’s final documents can be found at [CIDI/REMDES/doc.11/22](https://www.cidi.org/remdes/doc.11/22).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The Fifth Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of Social Development of the OAS was attended by delegates from North, Central, and South America, and the Caribbean, with broadly representative participation from all the regions of the Americas.

The expected outcomes of the ministerial meeting were achieved successfully, in that it addressed crucial issues for the region that require collective action, including the need to improve technical tools to better understand how to measure the multiple dimensions of poverty and, above all, how to use the results of those measurements to improve public policies for its eradication, through the launch of the Compendium of Experiences and Lessons Learned from the Measurement of Multidimensional Poverty in the Americas, prepared by CIDES Working Group 1 and OPHI.

The meeting’s participants also shared their experiences with the management, evaluation, and adaptability of social protection systems in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and strategies to effectively articulate the labor market and social security. In addition, for the first time, one of the central themes of the ministerial dialogue was the issue of personal care as the axis of social policies and of progress toward the construction of comprehensive care systems in the region.

Two fundamental results for the OAS social development ministerial process were also achieved: the approval of the Inter-American Declaration of Social Development Priorities and the

Plan of Action of the Dominican Republic 2022, which will guide the work of CIDES, through its newly elected authorities, over the next three years, until the Sixth REMDES is held in Mexico.

Another important achievement of the meeting was the presentation of the Regional Guidelines for the Social Inclusion of Survivors of Trafficking in Persons in the Americas, a document prepared jointly by the OAS and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as a non-binding guide on actions and areas of intervention that should be present in the planning and execution of strategies to facilitate the social inclusion of survivors of trafficking and their active participation in the social, economic, cultural, and political life of the communities where they live.

In addition, the Fifth REMDES provided a venue for face-to-face meetings for the region's high-level social development authorities —some of whom were only recently elected—and for representatives of international organizations, who took advantage of the opportunity to strengthen cooperation partnerships that will continue to promote our countries' solidarity-based, sustainable, and resilient recovery.

It should be noted that one of aspects that makes these exchanges in the area of social development different to others proposed by international organizations working in this area is the central role played by the dialogue between public-policy makers from the OAS member states.