

XXI INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF LABOR CLOSING SESSION

Draft talking points for Amb. Audrey P. Marks – Chair of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development of the OAS

Minister Claudio Moroni, Chair of the IACML

Mr. Vinicius Pinheiro, Regional Director for Latin American and the Caribbean of the International Labor Organization (*already confirmed with Argentina and ILO*)

Ministers of Labor of the Americas

Representatives of workers and employers of the region

Delegates, special guests

Four years after our last Conference in Barbados, having overcome distance barriers, travel restrictions and isolation measures, we were able to meet once again, this time in a virtual IACML, in a context where such a space for dialogue is of the utmost importance.

During these days, we could see “live” what inter-American collaboration and dialogue look like. Not only Ministers of Labor, but also workers’ and employers’ representatives were able to put forward the initiatives they are undertaking, as well as their views and proposals to overcome the very challenging circumstances we are facing.

I would like to highlight some of the key messages that we, as a region, share regarding our current situation. They came across clearly from the discussions during these days, and they are embedded in the Declaration and Plan of Action of Buenos Aires, which was just approved:

- Our region is facing one of the toughest moments in its history. Inequalities are deepening and the challenges in the labor market seem insurmountable.
- Crisis has disproportionately impacted those that were already in a very vulnerable situation in the labor market, particularly women, youth, informal workers, and migrants.
- However, we all recognize this crisis is an opportunity to work towards fixing our structural problems regarding social protection, occupational health and safety, and skills development, among other.

- We need to place employment at the center of the recovery. It is only through the creation of jobs, of good, decent jobs, that we will be able to have a sustainable, just and human-centered recovery.
- We recognize social dialogue is essential to build the foundations of inclusive development and to move from vulnerability to resilience, as Secretary General Almagro mentioned yesterday.
- Finally, we also saw great consensus around the need to strengthen our collaboration. To work together, as a region, to build a better future for the millions of women, men and children of the Americas.

With those key messages as a backdrop, allow me to briefly mention what I see as the most prominent outcomes of this meeting:

- With the virtual presence of no less than 30 Member States representing all sub-regions, as well as workers and employers, we have experienced first-hand what the future of work holds for us through emerging technologies such as digital platforms and telework.
- We held the first ever tripartite session of the Conference around “Institutionalized social dialogue to recover from the crisis and secure a future of work with social justice and sustainable development”.
- We reviewed and recognized the value of this Conference’s very own cooperation mechanism – the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL)- in supporting our Ministries of Labor in the way forward.
- We continued to reinforce the coordination between education and employment with the distinguished presence of the Minister of Education of Antigua and Barbuda, Chair of the Inter-American Committee on Education.
- We have launched our most recent gender study “The Institutionalization of a Gender Approach in the Ministries of Labor of The Americas: Balance of a Decade”, a publication that becomes more relevant now that we recognize that COVID-19 has disproportionately affected women.
- We have successfully established two Working Groups and elected their respective authorities to deepen the analysis of the Conference's priority themes and to follow-up on hemispheric initiatives.
- Finally and most prominently, you adopted the Declaration and Plan of Action of Buenos Aires, which reflect, after months of consensus-building

our hemispheric priorities and concrete actions to build “a more resilient world of work with sustainable development, decent work, productive employment, and social inclusion.” These instruments have plenty of concrete actions we need to take collectively in the months and years to come. [I would like to highlight a few:](#)

- Develop and implement strategies that reinforce occupational safety and health and promote a preventive approach.
- Accelerate and deepen the efforts made during the pandemic to increase social protection coverage and move towards universal social protection.
- Strengthen labor inspection. Provide the appropriate training and resources to inspectors, including technological tools to facilitate and increase the effectiveness of their work, including the ability to reach the most vulnerable populations.
- Address work on digital platforms, telework and work from home. Generate greater knowledge, information, and statistics on these phenomena, with the aim of having informed and evidence-based policymaking.
- Strengthen mechanisms to facilitate institutionalized social dialogue in policy formulation for creating a fairer, more equitable, and resilient world of work.
- 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
- 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.
- 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.
- Work towards the development of a Regional Qualifications Framework at the level of the Americas to guide the design and implementation of national qualification frameworks, with the support of OAS, ILO-CINTERFOR, and UNESCO to
- Continue deepening the institutionalization of gender in the Ministries of Labor as a means to achieve gender equality.

- Promote equal access of vulnerable persons to the labor market and full protection of their labor rights, aware that they have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

To finalize, allow me to thank Ministers of Labor and delegations for over 30 Member States of the OAS, as well as workers and employers representatives for your participation. It is a testament of your commitment to Hemispheric dialogue and cooperation.

Thank you to the Chair of the Inter-American Committee on Education, Minister Matthew of Antigua and Barbuda, and to the Minister of Labor of Spain.

Specialists from the ILO, the World Bank, ECLAC, UNESCO, the Ibero-American Organization on Social Security (OISS) and the Internet Society have also been following our deliberations. Thank you! We look forward to partner with you all in making the Plan of Action of Buenos Aires a reality.

Finally, allow me to congratulate and thank again Minister Moroni and his team at the Ministry of Labor. This has been a remarkable meeting thanks to your leadership, not only these past days, but in several months of negotiation and preparation. Along with the Technical Secretariat at the OAS, you have ensured a successful, productive and results-oriented labor ministerial.

Congratulations to the newly elected authorities of the meeting, the Ministers of Labor of Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Trinidad and Tobago, United States and Panama. Along with Argentina and Barbados, as part of the troika, you will guide the works of the Conference in the next 3 years. We know we are in the most capable hands.

It has been an honor, as Chair of the Inter-American Committee on Integral Development (CIDI) to witness this amazing manifestation of Inter-American solidarity and consensus-building.

Thank you.