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**REGULAR SESSION OF THE  
OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY – 2024  
PARALLEL EVENT**

**Dialogue on Social Protection and Informal Economies within the framework of Economic,  
Social, Cultural, and Environmental Rights (ESCER) in the Americas**

**Thursday, June 27, 2024  
Paraguayan Olympic Committee (POC)  
Luis Zubizarreta Auditorium Hall  
Hours: 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.**

**Organizers:**

- **The Working Group to Examine the Periodic Reports of the State Parties to the Protocol of San Salvador (WG):** The WG is a mechanism in charge of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights (ESCER) in the States that have ratified the Additional Protocol to the American Convention of Human Rights on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, also known as Protocol of San Salvador. This Working Group, in addition to examining the national reports presented by the States Parties, analyzes the progress and challenges in implementing these rights and makes recommendations to improve their protection and promotion.
- **OAS Department of Social Inclusion (DSI):** The DSI is the Technical Secretariat of the WGPSS and the Inter-American Commission for Social Development (CIDES). Its objective is to promote equity, social inclusion, and the exercise of rights, particularly for the most vulnerable groups.
- **Special Rapporteur on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights (REDESCA) of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR):** This office was created by the IACHR to strengthen the promotion and protection of economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights on the American continent, leading the Commission's efforts in this matter.
- **The Ministry of Social Development of Paraguay** is the country's governing body and coordinator of social policies. Its task is to design and implement policies and programs in social protection, economic inclusion, and social promotion. It currently holds the Inter-

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American Commission for Social Development (CIDES) vice presidency. This Commission is part of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI), and its purpose is to support the formulation of policies and the development of cooperative actions around social development, particularly to combat poverty and discrimination in the hemisphere. The Ministry has been accompanying the implementation of the Action Plan approved by its members on November 18, 2022.

- **Technical Unit of the Social Cabinet of the Presidency of the Republic of Paraguay:** is the operational, technical body of the Social Cabinet of the Presidency of the Republic, responsible for the direction, administration, execution, coordination, and supervision of the activities derived and dictated by the Executive Team of the Social Cabinet.

**Supporters:**

- **Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)** is a global network that seeks to improve the working conditions of workers—particularly women—in situations of poverty in the informal economy. Today, WIEGO is a thriving network active in more than 50 countries.
- **Freedom House** is a non-governmental organization based in Washington, D.C., with offices in about a dozen countries. It conducts research and promotes democracy, political freedom, and human rights.

**CONCEPT NOTE**

The informal economy is a significant sector in many societies, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean, encompassing a wide range of economic activities that are outside the reach of the State due to the lack of formal regulation. Workers in informal economies face numerous challenges, including vulnerability to economic and health risks, and are generally not guaranteed access to social security. The majority are women and migrants who represent more than 50% of the informal labor sector in Latin America and the Caribbean. This event aims to address the need to establish social protection mechanisms that are inclusive and sustainable to improve the living conditions of these workers.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), informal employment constitutes a considerable part of the economy and the labor market in many countries. It plays a crucial role in production, job creation, and income generation. However, informality exposes these workers to

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greater risks of vulnerability and precariousness. Informality negatively affects income adequacy, occupational safety, health, and working conditions in general. In Latin America and the Caribbean, at least 140 million people work informally, representing nearly 50% of the workforce.

The Office of the Special Rapporteur on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights, REDESCA, emphasizes the need to address the facets of informal and alternative economies, focusing on vulnerable groups and specific contexts.<sup>1</sup> The situation of sectors such as recyclers, informal commerce, workers in the “domestic” or “home” sphere, and the valuation of unpaid work, essential in the field of the right to care, are highlighted. Often excluded from conventional economic policies, these groups need strategies that recognize their contribution to the economy and encourage inclusion in social protection systems. The REDESCA points out the challenge that informal employment represents and how it is an obstacle to labor rights, social protection, access to decent work, inclusive development, and the rule of law, disproportionately affecting women.

The Working Group has also warned in its reports about the growth of labor informality in Latin America, especially among women, implying that many workers do not have access to formal contracts, social security, or labor protection. This situation generates precarious working conditions and, in many cases, violates labor rights. Therefore, in its recommendations to the States Parties to the San Salvador Protocol, the WG has insisted on the need to adopt appropriate and relevant measures, including multisector programs at the local and regional level, to progressively reduce the increase in the rate of labor informality.

For its part, the OAS Department of Social Inclusion of the Secretariat for Access to Rights and Equity, in its capacity as Technical Secretariat of the Meetings of Ministers and High Authorities of Social Development (REMDES) and of the Inter-American Commission on Social Development (CIDES), has accompanied the Member States in their calls to generate programs and initiatives that promote labor, productive, and financial inclusion, such as employability and income generation programs, promotion of formality, and access to social security, from the approach of the social and solidarity economy, reiterating the need to take into account freedom of association and the fundamental right to work, particularly for the populations in vulnerable situations. Likewise, this entity within the General Secretariat of the OAS serves as the Technical Secretariat of the Working Group of Protocol of San Salvador.

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<sup>1</sup> [Joint declaration on the promotion of the rights of assembly and association for workers in the informal economy \(No. RD084/24 of April 30, 2024\)](#). Special Rapporteurship on Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Rights of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR).

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The Social Protection System of Paraguay is a public policy built from a broad National dialogue that consists of articulating, from the perspective of citizen rights and throughout the life cycle, the intervention strategies of the public sector, consisting of three basic pillars: i) Social Integration, linked to universal and selective Policies aimed at the population in poverty, ii) Labor and Productive Insertion, related to Inclusion and Labor Regulation Policies and iii) Social Security, linked to contributory and non-contributory Policies. Likewise, recently this policy was linked to the National Poverty Reduction Plan to prioritize the least favored sectors of the population. With these initiatives, the country seeks to move towards the protection of the entire population against risks or contingencies that affect access to their fundamental rights in matters of education, health, and employment, among others.

It is important to highlight that the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, in its advisory opinion OC-27/21, warned that the informal economy represents an obstacle to the full exercise of workers' rights, including their union rights. Informal economy workers often perform their tasks in dispersed locations, making it difficult for them to come together to build a collective identity and coordinate campaigns. Additionally, certain forms of work, such as sex workers and waste pickers, are stigmatized, which can cause people who carry out these tasks to avoid publicly expressing the activity they carry out. In this sense, the Court highlights the need for States to adopt measures that facilitate the transition of workers from the informal to the formal economy and, at the same time, adopt those positive measures necessary to achieve the full enjoyment of their union rights during the transition, and that during this transition the livelihoods of informal workers are protected as a mandatory premise. The Court also acknowledged that the lack of recognition of the employment relationship can exclude workers from the coverage of labor legislation, making it difficult to exercise their right to work.

Furthermore, the International Labour Organization (ILO), through its Recommendation 204 on the Transition from the Informal Economy to the Formal Economy, issued on June 1, 2015, recognizes that the prevalence of the informal economy imposes significant barriers to the exercise of labor rights, including fundamental principles and rights at work. This situation negatively affects social protection, conditions for decent work, inclusive development, and the rule of law. Furthermore, it has adverse repercussions on the development of sustainable businesses, tax revenues, and the ability of governments to act, especially regarding economic, social, and environmental policies. Likewise, it impacts the strength of institutions and fair competition in national and international markets.

This recommendation also identifies the important role that States should play in guaranteeing informal workers, particularly in extending social protection floors.

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The event aims to promote a dialogue between experts, representatives of the OAS Member States, Civil Society, Academic Institutions, and Public Institutions of Paraguay on the interrelation of Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Rights (ESCER) and Social Protection. Likewise, it seeks to promote a regional commitment to creating policies that integrate these workers into social protection systems, thus ensuring their rights.

**AGENDA**

**11:30 a.m. Registration of Participants**

**12:00 - 12:20 p.m. Opening Remarks**

Remarks from the Minister of Social Development and Coordinator of the Social Cabinet of the Presidency of the Republic, Mr. Tadeo Rojas.

Remarks from the OAS Secretary for Access to Rights and Equity, Maricarmen Plata.

Remarks from the Special Rapporteur on Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Rights (REDESCA) of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), Javier Palummo.

Remarks from the Government Expert of Paraguay in the Working Group of the Protocol of San Salvador, María José Méndez.

**12:20 p.m. Panel on Social Protection and Informal Economies within the Framework of Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Rights (ESCER) in the Americas**

**Moderator:** Dr. Betilde Muñoz-Pogossian, Director of the OAS Department of Social Inclusion

***Rights of workers in informal economies***

Javier Palummo, Special Rapporteur on Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Rights (REDESCA) of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)

***Social Protection System in Paraguay, Progress and Challenges***

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Mr. Héctor Cárdenas, Executive Director of the Technical Unit of the Social Cabinet of the President of the Republic

***Right to Work in the Protocol of San Salvador, a Regional Outlook***

María José Méndez, Government Expert of Paraguay in the WGPSS

***Social Protection in the United States, the Inter-American Democratic Charter and the Inter-American Social Protection Network***

Enrique Roig, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor of the US Department of State

***Social Protection for Workers in the Informal Sector in Colombia and Venezuela***

Dionis Dávila, Executive Director of the Central Independent Trade Union Alliance of Venezuela

***The Extension of the Right to Social Protection to Workers in Informal Employment***

Tania Espinosa, Coordinator of the law program for Latin America at Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)

***The Human Rights Committee and the Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Rights***

Tania Abdo, Chair of the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations

***General Observations and Recommendations of the ESCR Committee on Social Protection and the Informal Economy***

Santiago Fiorio, Independent Expert of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) of the United Nations

**Q&A Session**

**13:50 p.m.**

Closing remarks from Mr. Héctor Cárdenas, Executive Director of the Technical Unit of the Social Cabinet of the Presidency of the Republic

**14:00 p.m.**

Lunch