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Inter-American Council for Integral Development
(CIDI)



**TECHNICAL PREPARATORY MEETING OF THE
XV INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS
OF LABOR (IACML)**

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DRAFT PLAN OF ACTION OF PORT OF SPAIN 2007

(Version approved during the Second Preparatory Meeting of the XV IACML in Port of Spain)

1. We, the Ministers of Labour, meeting in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, September 11 to 13, 2007, on the occasion of the XV Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour (IACML) of the Organization of American States (OAS), commit ourselves to implement the following Plan of Action:

A. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION: ORGANIZATION

2. The Chair *pro tempore* of the XV IACML (Trinidad and Tobago) in collaboration with the former Chair (Mexico) and the future Chair (Argentina), with the support of the Technical Secretariat of the OAS and in consultation with the representatives of the Trade Union Technical Advisory Council (COSATE), the Business Technical Advisory Committee on Labour Matters (CEATAL) and the Permanent Technical Committee on Labour Matters (COTPAL), will be responsible for promoting the implementation of the Plan of Action and for improving collaboration and coordination with key international institutions, namely the Organization of American States (OAS), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), the Inter-American Children's Institute (IIN), the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the Andean Development Corporation (CAF), the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Institute for Connectivity in the Americas (ICA), and the World Bank, among others.

B. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION: RESOURCES

3. Member States should devote the available economic, technical and logistical resources to implement the Plan of Action and to facilitate the participation of COSATE and CEATAL. In addition, the Chair *pro tempore* will invite the relevant regional and international organizations to make voluntary contributions to support activities and projects included in this Plan of Action, and to facilitate the participation of the said worker and employer organizations.

C. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION: WORKING GROUPS

4. Participation in Working Groups will be open to all Member States, as well as to COSATE and CEATAL. The Chair *pro tempore* will seek the means to ensure the active participation of all Member States and COSATE and CEATAL in the Working Groups. The General Secretariat of the OAS will be the Technical Secretariat for the Working Groups and relevant regional and international organizations will be called upon to provide support and assistance. The main objective of Working Groups is to advise the IACML on the purposes of the Declaration of Port of Spain. As such, the Groups will examine in greater depth the topics identified in this Plan of Action, provide pertinent information and studies and follow-up on related hemispheric initiatives.

WORKING GROUP 1: DECENT WORK AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

5. Working Group 1 will consider decent work as a main focus of its activities, from a perspective that envisages greater integration of economic, social, and labor policies, in order to promote labor and employment as crosscutting themes of public policies. In this sense, the Working Group will continue to build on the work of former Working Group 1, "Labor Dimensions of the Summit of the Americas Process," and will continue to examine the social and labor dimensions of globalization.
6. Working Group 1 will conduct the following activities, taking into account the Final Report presented to the XV IACML. The Working Group 1, in reviewing the activities, may include new areas as considered necessary:
 - a. To address the needs for greater coordination among the employment, trade, education, health and environmental sectors of the hemisphere through a higher interaction of the IACML members in the different Inter-American environments.
 - b. To entrust the Technical Secretariat to continue acting as liaison between the IACML and the Inter-American Program on Migrants adopted by the OAS General Assembly in 2005, to provide periodic reports on the issue and to follow-up on the decisions and actions taken at other regional and international forums on migration topics. Examine and share existing information on the migration phenomenon, and continue our examination of countries' initiatives to protect the labor rights of migrant workers in accordance with our reaffirmation that all migrants, regardless of their immigration status, should be accorded the full protection of human rights and the full observance of labor laws applicable to them, including the principles and labor rights embodied in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.
 - c. To continue the analysis, and exchange best practices on the effective implementation of policies and programmes to meet the challenges of the informal sector, particularly with respect to the gradual inclusion of non-registered workers in the formal sector, the extension of social protection to excluded sectors, and further training of workers in the informal economy to facilitate their incorporation into the formal economy. Additionally, examine and share existing information pertinent to the informal economy.

- d. [To support the project on gender and employment in the framework of the RIAL/IACML which has been developed by the Technical Secretariat, aimed at identifying and systematizing experiences on the issue, and achieving gender mainstreaming on labor and employment policies.]

(Pending the definitive approval in the COTPAL meeting)

- e. To promote the development of an integrated approach of labor and economic action in the formulation and the development of government policies for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), and enlist the support of specialized agencies in this regard.
- f. To promote mechanisms that contribute to the creation of an enabling environment for enterprises involved in the production of traditional and indigenous products, and enlist the support of specialized agencies in this regard.
- g. To continue the exchange of good practices and cooperation experiences among the countries of the Hemisphere on existing National and Regional Plans for the creation of Decent Work and to share information on Decent Work indicators.
- h. To exchange, among the countries of the Hemisphere, projects, programmes and policies which have had positive impacts on youth employment generation, giving special emphasis to innovative initiatives and to those made under an intersectoral coordination scheme and in partnership with the private sector.
- i. To continue analyzing, within the limits of our competencies, the labor dimension, the cooperation mechanisms contained therein, and the effects on employment of the regional and subregional integration processes, as well as of bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements.
- j. To share information on policies and best practices aimed at reducing both discrimination against workers with HIV/AIDS in the workplace and the incidence of HIV/AIDS and chronic non-communicable diseases through awareness raising campaigns and the promotion of a healthy working environment.
- k. To exchange experiences and good practices, from within and outside of the Hemisphere, on social security systems, in particular with respect to comprehensive coverage, benefits and mechanisms for transparency, efficiency and accountability in their collection and distribution processes.

WORKING GROUP 2: STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITIES OF MINISTRIES OF LABOUR TO RESPOND TO THE CHALLENGES OF PROMOTING DECENT WORK IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

- 7. Working Group 2 will continue making efforts to increase the institutional capacity of the Ministries of Labor, with a view to strengthening the promotion of decent work in the context of globalization. In this sense, the Group will continue to build on the work of former Working Group 2, "Building Capacity of Labor Ministries".

8. Working Group 2 will conduct the following activities, taking into account the Final Report presented to the XV IACML. The Working Group 2, in reviewing the activities, may include new areas as considered necessary:
 - a. Exchange information regarding capacity building of Ministries of Labor and social partner institutions, including but not limited to, issues related to coordination, sustainability, and participation of trade unions and employers' organizations.
 - b. Continue discussions on the outcomes and follow-up activities related to the diagnostics of labor administration systems of those Ministries of Labor that have requested them, with a view to promoting a better understanding of the challenges associated with the implementation of recommendations and possible responses to those challenges.
 - c. To promote improvements in the organizational structures of the Ministries of Labour to enable them to be more responsive to the new demands of the labor market; to strengthen competencies in the areas of administration, planning and results-based management; to implement communication strategies; and to improve the competencies of a professional civil service to better perform their responsibilities.
 - d. Identify new tools, and effective functional and organizational models, for public employment services (PES), including the upgrading of skills of public employment services personnel. Explore possibilities to coordinate with regional and international agencies the development of joint activities regarding employment. Similarly, continue promoting a holistic approach to PES and enlist the support of regional and international agencies in this regard.
 - e. Advance the analysis of new approaches to the training of workforce, with special attention to providing workers with the skills required by the labor market. Examine successful initiatives where workforce development programs are integrated with local economic development strategies, and Ministries of Labor work in cooperation with other ministries as appropriate, and in partnership with workers and employers.
 - f. Analyze the possibility of undertaking a workshop with the participation of key institutions in the promotion of employment and competitiveness such as the Ministries of Trade, Finance, Professional Training Institutions and Ministries of Education, among others, with the goal of designing overarching strategies to guide the actions of the Ministries of Labor and the key institutions in the promotion of employment and decent work.
 - g. Continue discussions, in collaboration with the ILO, for promoting the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work as embodied in the ILO Declaration, giving attention to the role and contributions of trade unions and employers' organizations. Of particular interest are strategies that have been proven to be successful and sustainable. Additionally, Working Group 2 will exchange information on the initiatives to incorporate the fundamental principles and rights at work into educational curricula.
 - h. Exchange information on national policies and strategies aimed at fulfilling the Mar del Plata commitment to eradicate the worst forms of child labor by no later than 2020, and the challenges encountered.

- i. Undertake workshops to exchange information on national and regional experiences with social dialogue related to labor issues, including those undertaken within the OAS framework, with an emphasis on examining specific initiatives and programs that have improved the participation of the social partners.
- j. Exchange experiences on initiatives to improve the effective enforcement of labor laws, with particular attention to labor inspectorates at all levels, and to promote a culture of compliance with labor laws and regulations, including through outreach to and participation by trade unions and employers.
- k. Exchange information concerning normative reforms with the aim to improve and make more expeditious and efficient the administration of labor justice.
- l. Exchange information and best practices on countries' regulations and codes, as well as strategies, policies, and experiences in the area of occupational safety and health, with a view to promoting a culture of prevention and control of occupational hazards in the Hemisphere.
- m. Exchange best practices of effective policy and programme implementation to address the challenges of informal employment, particularly as they relate to the incorporation of non-registered workers into formal employment.
- n. Review best practices designed to prevent and eliminate discrimination in the workplace implemented by Ministries of Labor, employers organizations and trade unions. In this regard, exchange best practices and successful approaches that target specific vulnerable groups, both before and during employment.

D. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION: DIRECTIVES FOR THE FUNCTIONING OF THE WORKING GROUPS

- 9. The Working Groups will be coordinated by the following Ministries of Labour, elected by this Conference, who can perform the functions assigned directly or through a representative:
 - Working Group 1: Ministers of Labor of *** (Chair), *** (Vice Chair), and *** (Vice Chair).
 - Working Group 2: Ministers of Labor of *** (Chair), *** (Vice Chair), and *** (Vice Chair).
- 10. The Working Groups should decide on a timetable for the activities contained in this Plan of Action and establish, by February 2008, procedures and methodologies for their meetings, based on the earlier experiences of the Working Groups. The Working Groups shall meet at least twice before the XVI Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour.
- 11. The Working Groups should consider the dissemination of any public information, jointly with COSATE, CEATAL and governments, in the framework of their activities.

E. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION: THE INTER-AMERICAN NETWORK FOR LABOR ADMINISTRATION

12. The Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL, by its Spanish acronym) will continue to be strengthened as the mechanism for cooperation and technical assistance of IACML. It was created by this Conference to strengthen the institutional and human capacities of the Ministries of Labor, through an integrating mechanism for dissemination of knowledge and experience.
13. The RIAL will carry out the following activities:
 - a. Identify, organize and disseminate the experience and knowledge of the Ministries of Labor of the Hemisphere.
 - b. Collect and systematize information regarding programs and projects in priority topics for labor administration.
 - c. Foster critical transfer of the various experiences and lessons learned through workshops and cooperation activities among countries.
 - d. Facilitate communication between Ministries of Labor, international organizations, financial agencies and workers and employers representatives and civil society.
 - e. Improve the ability of the Ministries of Labor to identify their institutional needs and to formulate proposals to receive technical and financial assistance.
 - f. Strengthen coordination and collaboration among international organizations and cooperation agencies.
14. The Technical Secretariat will continue to coordinate the RIAL activities, following the priorities defined by the Declaration and Plan of Action of Port of Spain and with the participation of IACML members.
15. Member States will make every effort to ensure the effective operation of the RIAL, including making financial and technical contributions. In this regard, we entrust the leaders of the IACML (troika and Working Group authorities) to explore participation, decision and follow-up mechanisms regarding the operation of the RIAL, including its Cooperation Fund and elaborate a proposal in this regard by February 2008. Additionally, the Technical Secretariat will continue exploring possible sources of funding.
16. Member States commit to regularly provide information on their on-going programs, including best practices to the RIAL Portfolio of Programs. We request the Technical Secretariat to regularly update this Portfolio to provide a reliable, current information base on programs in the Hemisphere as the basis for exchange and horizontal cooperation activities. In this effort, we request the Technical Secretariat to work in coordination with other international agencies.