DECLARATION OF MEXICO

PEOPLE AND THEIR WORK AT THE HEART OF GLOBALIZATION

(Adopted at the closing session, held on September 27, 2005)

1. We, the Ministers participating in the XIV Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor (IACML) of the Organization of American States, met in Mexico City, Mexico, on September 26 and 27, 2005, to address issues related to the social and labor dimensions of globalization in the Americas, recognizing the value of work and the dignity of those who perform it. We celebrate the decision of our Heads of State and Government to accept the initiative of the Government of Argentina to adopt as the theme for the Fourth Summit of the Americas “Creating jobs to fight poverty and strengthen democratic governance,” to whose success we will contribute.

2. We reiterate that the Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS) is a legal and political framework on which relations among the states of the Americas are based. We renew our commitment to respect and comply with all the purposes and principles set forth in the Charter. In particular we underscore the role of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI) in promoting the principles of inter-American solidarity and cooperation, to pool our efforts to achieve integral development, which encompasses the economic, social, educational, cultural, scientific, and technological fields.

3. We recall the Inter-American Democratic Charter, adopted by the OAS in Lima, Peru, in September 2001, and, in particular, Article 10 thereof, which recognizes that the promotion and strengthening of democracy requires the full and effective exercise of workers’ rights and the application of core labor standards, as recognized in the International Labour Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up of 1998. Democracy is strengthened by improving working conditions and enhancing the quality of life of workers in the Hemisphere.

4. We reaffirm our commitment to respect, promote, and realize the principles of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up. We consider that the implementation of this commitment provides the basis for sustainable economic growth with social justice. Further, we commit to continuing to strengthen the application of our national labor laws and to promote their effective and efficient enforcement, conscious that work is a right and a social duty, and will consider the ratification of the eight ILO Fundamental Conventions.
5. We recall that the Declaration of Margarita, adopted at the High-Level Meeting on Poverty, Equity, and Social Inclusion, expressed a commitment to the promotion of dignified, productive, and decent work; the improvement of labor conditions; the creation of job opportunities; and the enhancement of workers’ qualifications.

6. We recall the Salvador Declaration of the XIII Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor of the OAS, held in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, in September 2003, in which we proposed the establishment of a mechanism, under the auspices of the IACML, that would further the development, modernization, and strengthening of ministries of labor through technical assistance and horizontal cooperation. We also recall that the Salvador Declaration called for a more active role for the region’s labor ministries, taking into account the need for integration of social, labor, and economic policies. We note the value gained from our interactions with the ministers of trade and the ministers of health of the Americas and are committed to continuing to pursue these channels of communication.

7. We recognize the importance of implementing the labor commitments expressed by the Heads of State and Government in the Declarations of the Summits of the Americas, with special attention to the vital objectives of economic growth with equity for reducing poverty and enhancing social development and democratic governance.

8. We reaffirm our conviction that Decent Work, as embodied in the four main topics that constitute the strategic objectives of the ILO—promotion of fundamental principles and rights at work, employment, social protection, and social dialogue—is key to the improvement of living conditions for the peoples of our Hemisphere and for their participation in the benefits of human and material progress, given that decent work is necessary for sustainable development in each of our countries and can contribute to successful hemispheric economic integration.

9. The Fourth Summit of the Americas offers an opportunity to highlight the importance of ensuring that the jobs created by our economies are consistent with the objectives of decent work, and, further, to demonstrate the vital contribution of ministries of labor in this process. We strongly support the progress made by the Summits of the Americas process towards the promotion of policies aimed at ensuring that economic growth is accompanied by the creation of decent work.

10. We emphasize our firm commitment to the goals of the United Nations Millennium Declaration and, in particular, to fighting poverty and eradicating extreme poverty, through the promotion and creation of dignified employment. We remain committed to the objectives identified in the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development.

11. We note the report entitled “A Fair Globalization: Creating Opportunities for All” of the ILO World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, as a contribution to hemispheric dialogue towards a fully inclusive and equitable globalization. Decent work is fundamental for human development. In a globalization that takes the human dimension into account, a policy is needed whereby government, the private sector, and society share responsibility for the creation of decent work. We recognize that the effects of globalization will vary within and among countries. In light of the asymmetries between developed and developing countries, different policy responses will be needed to address the challenges and reap the benefits of globalization, in the context of solidarity and cooperation.
12. We note with interest the mandate issued by the General Assembly of the OAS at its thirty-fifth regular session, which requested the Working Group in charge of drafting the Social Charter and its Plan of Action, to contribute to strengthening existing OAS instruments on democracy, integral development, and the fight against poverty. We urge the Working Group to take into consideration the contributions from the Trade Union Technical Advisory Council (COSATE), the Business Technical Advisory Committee on Labor Matters (CEATAL), and other worker and employer organizations of the Hemisphere.

13. We underscore the right to work and that work is fundamental to human dignity, which is fully expressed if the rights and obligations of labor relations actors are respected and promoted in a context of decent work. Work affords people the opportunity to realize their potential, to foster social cohesion, and to advance economic, social, political, and cultural development, both individually and as members of society. We shall endeavor to advance a labor agenda in our region that promotes dignified employment, placing the person at the center of all economic activities, as both the creator and beneficiary of work.

14. We believe that economic growth is an indispensable but not sufficient condition to confront the high rates of unemployment, informal work, and labor precariousness that many of our societies face. Growth with equity requires a combination of economic expansion and social inclusion. Generating decent work and quality employment is an effective way to achieve social cohesion and inclusion. Work is a substantive component for the development of full citizenship and the consolidation of democratic governance.

15. We recognize the significant contribution that economic integration and trade liberalization, including the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), will make to the achievement of the broad Summit objectives of creating jobs to fight poverty and strengthen democratic governance. At the national level and in our IACML work program, we will analyze and exchange information to improve the understanding of the labor dimensions of free trade agreements and regional integration processes, where they are applicable, and their impact on decent work. Exchange of information and cooperation in this area are of particular importance at the national and regional levels.

1. Venezuela reiterates the reservation it entered to paragraph 15 of the Declaration of Quebec City and to paragraph 6.A of the Plan of Action, as concerns the entry into force of the FTAA in 2005. Venezuela reaffirms its reservation to paragraph 12 of the Declaration of Nuevo León, which reads as follows: “Venezuela enters a reservation with respect to the paragraph on the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) because of questions of principle and profound differences regarding the concept and philosophy of the proposed model and because of the manner in which specific aspects and established timeframes are addressed. We ratify our commitment to the consolidation of a regional fair trade bloc as a basis for strengthening levels of integration. This process must consider each country’s particular cultural, social, and political characteristics; sovereignty and constitutionality; and the level and size of its economy, in order to guarantee fair treatment.”

Venezuela reiterates that negotiations for the establishment of any regional integration organization must take into account the broad social agenda of the peoples of the Americas, for the purpose of helping to eradicate poverty, raise the living standards of the marginalized sectors of our populations, generate jobs, improve the working conditions of workers, promote social inclusion, strengthen social dialogue and protection, improve health and education, and protect the environment, as well as respect and recognize the value of cultural diversity, as embodied in the Declaration and the Plan of Action of the 2001 Summit of the Americas.
16. We will promote the incorporation of the objectives of decent work into public policies with the objective of generating quality employment for the workers of the Hemisphere. Employment is a crosscutting theme that links economic, social, and labor policies.

17. We commit ourselves also to articulating active policies that put the individual at the center of work and the economy and that combine the creation of work and employment with the promotion of the dimensions of decent work: fairly-paid employment, with social protection and the promotion of a gender perspective and the full exercise of labor, occupational safety and health, and union rights. Mechanisms for collective bargaining and social dialogue should be promoted. We will also promote citizen participation in general in support of these objectives.

18. We reaffirm our commitment to promote and encourage local, national, and regional policies and programs for innovation in science, technology, and engineering, in support of entrepreneurship, particularly micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises and other production units, whose expansion, competitiveness, and global productivity will contribute to the growth of private investment and the generation of employment.

19. We recognize the importance of lifelong learning and professional training as essential tools for promoting the employability and productivity of individuals, responding to the challenges of competitiveness, and allowing technological innovations to contribute to the development of people and our nations. We emphasize that lifelong learning for professional training and civic education is part of a process leading to social inclusion. Those educational objectives should be geared toward training workers to deal with new working conditions, and should be integrated into broader policies to promote fairly paid employment, along with policies on education, sustainable development, innovation, and technological training policies. The impact of economic policies on employment should elicit the timely design of mechanisms for the effective promotion of employability. Additionally, we recognize the importance of labor market information in the effective planning of professional instruction and training. We recognize the importance of the effective participation of social actors in the design and implementation of these policies.

20. We will promote policies that encourage the re-entry of unemployed workers into the labor force. In a dynamic economic environment, we have a fundamental responsibility to develop policies to improve the functioning of our labor markets, in support of economic growth. In this regard, we will continue to explore options for building and strengthening the institutional capacity of ministries of labor, and respectfully request that attention be directed to this issue at the highest levels of our governments.

21. We recognize that the informal economy is a multidimensional phenomenon which, to be addressed, requires structural analysis and treatment, through a mix of policies and approaches. We will contribute to the development of public policies, recognizing the sector’s heterogeneity and seeking its future incorporation into the formal economy. We will endeavor to create a regulatory framework that facilitates the establishment of new enterprises, the promotion of an entrepreneurial spirit, and the creation of formal enterprises.

22. We reiterate the importance of protecting health and safety at work. We also recognize the importance of promoting a culture of prevention in this field, as well as the advisability
of adopting an integrated approach that involves environmental and other public policies, particularly policies on employment, health, and social security.

23. We reiterate the importance of strengthening and expanding the coverage of social security systems with effective policies that seek to promote the principles of universality and solidarity and ensure their financial sustainability, fostering equity and social inclusion.

24. We recognize the fundamental importance of the principle of equality and nondiscrimination in employment, and we assume the responsibility of the states for the observance of these principles and their application to all workers. We will encourage the coordination of equal opportunity policies that combat all forms of discrimination at work and we will strive towards equal access to opportunities for decent work for all segments of our populations, with special attention to groups in a vulnerable situation, such as indigenous peoples, minorities, refugees, people with disabilities, youth, and the elderly.

25. We reaffirm 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.

26. We reaffirm our commitment to design and apply labor policies that facilitate the full incorporation of women into the world of work, free from discrimination and with equal opportunities. We will promote the integration of a gender perspective into labor policies, especially in terms of pay, access, and advancement at work, aiming to eliminate existing disparities between men and women.

27. We commit to protecting children from economic exploitation and from the performance of tasks that may interfere with their education and integral development, in accordance with the principle of the effective abolition of child labor, which is in the ILO Declaration on the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. In addition we will take immediate and effective methods to prevent and eradicate the worst forms of child labor, pursuant to Convention 182 of the ILO (1999). Increased access to quality basic education for all children and adolescents is the way to ensure that today’s children have improved prospects of obtaining decent work as adults. We call upon international cooperation agencies to support, with financial or other resources, countries that so request in their efforts in this regard.

28. We recognize that social dialogue is a key factor in consolidating a democratic way of life in the area of labor and production, maintaining harmonious labor relations, facilitating conflict resolution, and, more generally, strengthening democracy. We commit ourselves to promoting and facilitating dialogue in the context of labor relations and at the national, subregional, and hemispheric levels.

29. We recognize the essential and unique advisory role played by employers’ and workers’ organizations in defining labor and employment policies, as well as the necessary role and advisory functions of COSATE and CEATAL, at the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor.
30. We underscore the great responsibility that we, as Ministers of Labor, have to our nations’ workers. We stress that the future of democracies will depend in large measure upon their capacity to generate productive, high-quality, decent, and sustainable jobs, which are essential to fighting poverty and strengthening democratic governance.

We resolve:

A. To implement a Plan of Action based on this Declaration, pursuing the activities and topics developed at previous Inter-American Conferences of Ministers of Labor, and to devote the necessary resources to that effort.

B. To rename the two Working Groups according to the functions assigned to them, as follows:


   Working Group 2: “Strengthening the Capacities of the Ministries of Labor to Respond to the Challenges of Promoting Decent Work in the Context of Globalization.”

C. To instruct the Working Groups to continue activities and actions that contribute to the objectives and commitments set out in the Declaration of Mexico.

D. In fulfillment of the commitments of this Declaration, we will continue to collaborate with regional and international organizations that exercise a role in the promotion of employment and in the betterment of working conditions, particularly 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), and the World Bank, among others.