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► 20th American
Regional Meeting

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► **Reinforcing the
connection between
growth, jobs and rights:
Social justice as the
foundation for lasting peace**

Report of the Director-General

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► Reinforcing the connection between growth, jobs and rights: Social justice as the foundation for lasting peace

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► Preface

Seven years have passed since the last American Regional Meeting was held in 2018. In the intervening years, the American continent has witnessed progress, persistent challenges and profound transformations that have shaped its current reality and its vision of the future. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic represented a turning point that had a significant impact on societies, economies and the world of work in the countries of the Americas.

Today's world is characterized by high levels of uncertainty and multiple sources of tension. Against that backdrop, the promotion of democratic values, strengthening of institutions and consolidation of tripartite social dialogue are vital if progress is to be made towards lasting peace based on social justice. This is not an abstract ideal, but a prerequisite for achieving stability, equality and dignity in the world of work while promoting sustainable and inclusive economic development.

Now more than ever, there is a need to reinforce the connection between economic growth, the creation of productive employment and respect for labour rights. Although they are facing significant challenges, many countries in the Americas have a wealth of natural resources and economic, social and cultural diversity, which represent an opportunity to lead a structural transformation to a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable development model.

In these circumstances, it is vital to **recognize the progress achieved and the efforts made by the tripartite constituents in the Americas.** The region has made progress in key areas of the world of work, such as the elimination of child labour, the promotion of gender equality, reductions in youth unemployment, the ratification of fundamental ILO Conventions and the strengthening of social dialogue. These achievements are evidence of the sustained commitment of governments and employers' and workers' organizations and have helped to consolidate institutional frameworks intended to promote social justice.

However, this progress is clearly still fragile. **Deep-seated structural challenges** continue to limit the transformative capacity of labour and social policies. Those challenges include persistently high levels of informality, which is still a deeply rooted characteristic of many of the region's economies, and gaps in access to productive employment and decent work, particularly for young people, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and migrants. Discrimination, exclusion and inequality are barriers that must be removed as a matter of urgency to achieve inclusive and sustainable development.

In this context of **profound technological, demographic, environmental and geopolitical transformations**, development strategies must be reviewed. These transformations cannot be allowed to deepen inequalities or to leave anyone behind. On the contrary, they must be treated as opportunities to make progress towards a new, human-centred social contract based on the values of social justice.

This report attempts to provide a fresh perspective on the challenges and opportunities facing the region, with the aim of helping to **build a more just world of work and making social justice the foundation for lasting peace.** This perspective is based on four fundamental pillars: democracy, peace, decent work and social dialogue.

All countries on the continent are called on to take action towards achieving this shared objective. They do not have to start from scratch, as they may draw on a robust body of standards, successful experience and committed social actors. There is, however, a need to ramp up efforts, come up with innovative responses and strengthen regional cooperation.

Social justice is a collective responsibility and a prerequisite for lasting peace. This regional meeting represents a strategic opportunity to renew and strengthen our commitment to it.

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► 1. The Americas region in the face of current challenges

1.1. Regional progress and challenges in promoting social justice

1. At the last two American Regional Meetings (in 2014 ¹ and 2018 ²), concerns were raised at the growing global uncertainty and the inherent risks for Latin America and the Caribbean in the face of possible economic stagnation and increasing inequalities, which could lead to regression in the main social and labour market indicators.
2. Today, the world is experiencing a climate of upheaval and uncertainty ³ that goes beyond the economic sphere to permeate the social and political spheres, exacerbated by increasing social discontent and the erosion of the credibility of democratic institutions. This is occurring in a context of continuous rapid technological, climate and demographic transformations that are exerting significant pressure on labour markets.
3. Inequality and poverty coexist and feed into one another. The labour market plays a crucial role as households' main source of income while also determining how the fruits of economic progress are distributed.
4. Over the last 30 years, Latin America has reduced its levels of inequality and poverty. ⁴ In some countries, labour institutions such as the minimum wage and the strengthening of contributory and non-contributory social protection have played an essential role. Nevertheless, the region continues to be one of the most unequal in the world, with a Gini coefficient of 0.452, compared with 0.3 in high-income developed countries.
5. Moreover, significant gender inequality persists, illustrated by lower labour participation and greater poverty rates among women (in 2023, for every 100 men living in poverty, there were 121 women in the same situation). ⁵ This can be explained to a large extent by the gendered division of labour and women's greater participation in paid and unpaid care work.
6. The nature of the link between economic activity (a wealth generator) and the labour market (a wealth distributor) determines to a large extent societies' ability to convert economic progress into sustainable and inclusive social development. But the connection between growth and employment tends to become a virtuous circle if it is strengthened by a third element: rights.
7. This report raises the same key question that I addressed in my report to the International Labour Conference in June this year: ⁶ **How can we ensure that economic growth generates more and**

¹ ILO, *Twenty-first Century Challenges for the Americas: Full and Productive Employment and Decent Work*, Report of the Director-General, 18th American Regional Meeting, 2014.

² ILO, *Preparing the Future of Work We Want in the Americas through Social Dialogue*, Report of the Director-General, 19th American Regional Meeting, 2018.

³ ILO, *Panorama Laboral 2024 de América Latina y el Caribe*, 2025 (only available in Spanish, with an [Executive Summary](#) in English).

⁴ According to the *Social Panorama of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2024: The challenges of non-contributory social protection in advancing towards inclusive social development* of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 27.3 per cent of the population in Latin America had insufficient income in 2023, a rate similar to that of 2014 (27.7 per cent). Meanwhile, there has been even less progress in reducing extreme poverty: it is now 3 percentage points higher than in 2014, albeit lower than the rate recorded in the 1990s.

⁵ ECLAC and UN-Women, *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Regional Gender Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean: Gender Indicators up to 2024*, 2025, p. 17.

⁶ ILO, *Jobs, Rights and Growth: Reinforcing the Connection*, Report of the Director-General, ILC.113/I(B), 2025, para. 6.

better jobs while strengthening respect for labour rights? This report endeavours to delve into the recent status of that connection and the way in which it is influenced by some of the factors and conditions inherent to the region's labour markets.

1.1.1. Full and productive employment and sustainable enterprises for decent work

8. Since the last American Regional Meeting in 2018, **the growth–employment nexus** has been under significant strain. In each short-term economic cycle, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, one element has been decisive in understanding the relationship: low productivity.
9. Economic growth is known to be a vital condition for job creation, but it is not in itself sufficient to ensure the quality of those jobs.
10. In recent years, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have gone down a **path of low growth**. However, this low growth is far from an anomaly. Average growth in the region between 2011 and 2024 was around 1.5 per cent.⁷ Since 2011, Latin America and the Caribbean has been growing less than the rest of the world, and it is also the emerging or developing region with the lowest growth. This low performance is due in large part to the **stagnation in labour productivity** since 1980, which has weakened the growth–employment nexus. The labour productivity gaps in the region have widened in comparison with developed economies and even with other emerging economies.⁸ This is partly explained by the inefficient allocation of factors of production (labour and other resources) to higher-productivity sectors. It is also linked to the high rate of informal employment and economic units, particularly smaller enterprises. In Northern America, labour productivity is forecast to grow at an average of 1.6 per cent annually between 2024 and 2026, compared with an average of 1.3 per cent annually over the period 2014–24.⁹
11. Productivity can act as a catalyst for the creation of productive employment and decent work. To achieve this, there is a need for a **systemic approach that considers the key determinants of growth and promotes productivity ecosystems that encourage productive employment and decent work**.¹⁰ There is also a need to create an enabling environment for investment and the development of sustainable enterprises and to create adequate public policies.¹¹ Another means of promoting growth and productivity is closing gender gaps in the labour market.¹²
12. It is important to recognize the remarkable ability of the countries of the Americas to **recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic** thanks to the speed and scale of the efforts made by their governments to implement policies to support employment and protect income. In the United States of America and Canada, the fiscal packages introduced in 2020 to assist workers who lost their jobs were equivalent to 25.5 per cent of gross domestic product in the United States and 14.6 per cent in Canada.¹³ In Latin America and the Caribbean, countries adapted their social, labour and economic policies to extend income protection, improve contributory and non-contributory social protection systems, boost support programmes for micro, small and

⁷ Source: ECLAC statistical data portal, CEPALSTAT.

⁸ ECLAC and ILO, *Employment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean: Labour Productivity in Latin America*, No. 27, 2022, 22.

⁹ ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2025*, 2025, 26–27.

¹⁰ ILO, *Promoting Productivity Ecosystems for Decent Work*, GB.346/INS/9, 2022, para. 17.

¹¹ ILO, *Impulsando la productividad en América Latina*, 2023 (only available in Spanish).

¹² ILO, *Cerrar la brecha de género para impulsar la economía y la productividad en América Latina*, 2024 (only available in Spanish).

¹³ ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2022*, 2021, 48.

medium-sized enterprises and implement impact mitigation strategies for workers in vulnerable situations, such as those in the informal economy.¹⁴

13. The region has now almost fully recovered from the impact of the pandemic (the main labour indicators have reached levels similar to those of 2019), in a context of moderate economic growth and gradually decelerating inflation.

1.1.2. Structural challenges in the world of work

14. The region is facing three structural challenges that have historically resulted in significant decent work deficits. These deficits undermine the growth–employment–rights nexus, limit countries' capacity to reduce poverty and income inequality, and impact on matters such as labour migration flows, which will be addressed below.
15. First, a key factor in the weakening of the virtuous nexus between growth and employment is **the high rate of informality in Latin America and the Caribbean**. In 2024, the regional informality rate was estimated at around 47.6 per cent, and it even stabilized slightly below the pre-pandemic level. In 2020, informality fell as a result of mass job losses in the informal economy; however, in subsequent years, it was informal employment that drove job recovery.¹⁵ This trend has been decreasing, partly because of the dynamism of formal wage employment in the private sector. Nevertheless, there is a high degree of variation among countries, sectors of economic activity and companies of different sizes.
16. To reverse the situation, there is a vital need for a comprehensive policy approach. The ILO's Strategy for the Promotion of Formalization in Latin America and the Caribbean 2024–30 (FORLAC 2.0),¹⁶ which is based on the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), promotes coordinated strategies that bring together social protection policies, productivity, social dialogue and effective regulation, as indicated in the conclusions concerning the general discussion on addressing informality and promoting the transition to formality for decent work.¹⁷
17. Second, serious **gender gaps in the labour market** persist. Women's labour force participation rate is 22 percentage points lower than men's, and women's unemployment rate is 2.0 percentage points higher.¹⁸ Unpaid care work is the main reason why women remain outside the workforce and constitutes the greatest barrier to their remaining and progressing in the labour market.¹⁹ These factors, when combined with the high levels of precariousness that women face when joining the labour market and their difficulties in remaining in it, have a decisive influence on their income. For example, the employment rate of the highest-skilled men (78 per cent) was 50 percentage points higher than that of women with low educational attainment (28 per cent).²⁰

¹⁴ ILO, *2020 Labour Overview: Latin America and the Caribbean*, 2020, 60–67.

¹⁵ According to ILO, *Panorama Laboral 2023 de América Latina y el Caribe* (an *Executive Summary* of which is available in English), job recovery from late 2020 onwards was driven mainly by informal employment; between the third quarter of 2020 and the second quarter of 2023, informal occupations accounted for between 40 and 95 per cent of the net increase in employment.

¹⁶ For more information on FORLAC 2.0, see “Strategy for the Promotion of Formalization in Latin America and the Caribbean”.

¹⁷ ILO, *Resolution concerning the general discussion on addressing informality and promoting the transition to formality for decent work*, ILC.113/Resolution IV, 2025.

¹⁸ ILO, *Panorama Laboral 2024: América Latina y el Caribe*, 13.

¹⁹ The ILO has a regional road map on work in the care sector in Latin America and the Caribbean; see “*Hacer del trabajo doméstico un trabajo decente: Invertir en cuidado. Una agenda común*” (only available in Spanish).

²⁰ ILO, *Panorama Laboral 2024: América Latina y el Caribe*, 65.

The ILO has estimated that, in 2024, women in Latin America and the Caribbean earned, on average, just 60.5 per cent of the occupational earnings of men.²¹

18. Despite countries' efforts to introduce labour legislation that eliminates gender discrimination, there has been only a modest reduction in wage inequality between men and women.²² It is necessary to transform the unequal division of care work between men and women into a more equal organization of care, promoting social co-responsibility among the State, the private sector, families, the social and solidarity economy and the community,²³ to make progress not only towards gender equality, but also towards greater levels of social justice.²⁴
19. Third, **decent work deficits affecting young people** continue to be one of the greatest challenges in the region. In 2024, the average unemployment rate among persons aged between 15 and 24 years in the subregion of Latin America and the Caribbean was 13.3 per cent, its lowest level for 12 years. Nevertheless, youth unemployment is 2.8 times higher than unemployment among adults (aged 25 years and above). The average informality rate among young persons is 60 per cent, a figure that rises to 77 per cent among those in the 15- to 19-year age bracket. Furthermore, the proportion of persons aged between 15 and 24 not in employment, education or training in 2023 was approximately 25 per cent. Women are overrepresented in this group, making up 7 out of every 10 persons.²⁵ The lack of training and accumulated work experience among this group of young persons significantly limits their opportunities to access decent work. Moreover, transformations in the world of work are creating new challenges that compound the historic deficits facing young persons. While new forms of work, particularly work via digital platforms, are opening up new opportunities for jobs and income generation, they are also creating challenges for decent work.²⁶
20. There is therefore a need for a comprehensive policy framework on productive employment and decent work for young persons. It is vital to adapt education and training to the needs of the labour market, promote lifelong skills development and encourage young persons to participate in the decisions that affect their future.
21. As mentioned above, **labour migration** is closely linked to these three structural challenges. In addition to violence and sociopolitical crises, the search for employment and income to support families is one of the main drivers of migration in the region. In the Americas, migration is characterized by mixed flows of economic migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons.
22. The positive aspect of labour migration is its contribution to the economic growth of countries of destination (since it helps to fill vacancies in sectors with labour shortages, boosts key areas and strengthens productivity²⁷) and countries of origin (through remittances). However, labour

²¹ ILO modelled estimates, "Gender income gap, ratio of women's to men's labour income, May 2025 (%)", ILOSTAT database.

²² Sonia Gontero and Javiera Ravest, *Desigualdad salarial de género en América Latina ¿Cuál es la brecha relevante por cerrar?* (ILO, 2024), 33 (only available in Spanish).

²³ ILO, *Resolution concerning decent work and the care economy*, International Labour Conference, 112th Session, 2024, point 7 of the conclusions.

²⁴ ILO, *Las personas trabajadoras de América Latina con responsabilidad de cuidados: Una mirada regional al Convenio núm. 156*, 2024, 10 (only available in Spanish).

²⁵ ILO, *Juventud en cambio: desafíos y oportunidades en el mercado laboral de América Latina y el Caribe*, 2025 (only available in Spanish).

²⁶ ILO, *Survey on Workers on Web-Based Digital Platforms: New Data for Latin America and the Caribbean Region*, 2025, 2.

²⁷ ILO, *La formación profesional y la certificación de competencias laborales como herramientas para lograr una migración laboral segura, ordenada y regular, así como una integración socioeconómica sostenible*, technical note, October 2024, 5 (only available in Spanish).

migration governance must address complex issues: protecting the rights of migrant workers, promoting their socio-economic integration and strengthening international cooperation.

23. Irregular migration and exploitation are also persistent challenges. The ILO Regional Strategy on Labour Migration and Human Mobility in Latin America and the Caribbean 2023–30, which was drawn up in a tripartite manner, therefore underlines the need to adopt comprehensive public policies to guarantee decent working conditions and respect for the rights of migrant workers.²⁸

1.1.3. Strong labour market institutions

24. A key function of labour market institutions is mediating effectively between labour supply and demand to increase productive employment and decent work. This function is particularly relevant in contexts of crisis or profound transformation. Strong, resilient institutions are needed not only to respond to adverse situations, but also to promote inclusive and sustainable transitions. Three strategic institutional dimensions that impact the growth–employment–rights nexus are set out below.
25. In the Americas, **vocational training** is highly diverse. While some countries with stronger, more diversified economic sectors have opted to harness technical and technological training as a key driver to increase productivity, promote innovation and strengthen competitiveness, other countries are facing persistent structural challenges in terms of coverage, relevance and quality of education. This disparity illustrates the urgent need for comprehensive and adaptive approaches that respond to local and global realities.
26. The most significant developments include the expansion of the technical and technological training offer, with more flexible and short-term programmes aimed at sectors with high demand for labour. Additionally, partnerships with the production sector have emerged to design programmes adapted to market needs, and dual training models that combine study and work have been introduced. Furthermore, substantial progress has been made in implementing labour skills certification systems that recognize knowledge acquired outside the classroom – a significant measure that includes workers from the informal economy and enhances their employability, as well as facilitating migrants’ integration into the labour market. Challenges include the lack of connection between education programmes and the skills demanded by the labour market, significant inequality in access to training and variability in the quality of training, particularly in rural areas and in contexts of poverty. The low level of coordination with secondary and tertiary education poses another obstacle, since it limits education trajectories.
27. Initiatives that modernize vocational training are emerging in response. Digitalization is opening up new possibilities through virtual platforms, although there remains a significant digital divide. In addition, programmes aimed at emerging sectors such as information technologies, renewable energy and the circular and care economies are beginning to be developed. However, there is a need to increase coordination between education, labour and economic policies in order to meet the current and future needs of enterprises and production sectors, thereby contributing to inclusive and sustainable social development. **Technical cooperation between countries** plays a decisive role, since it facilitates the exchange of good practices, standards harmonization and joint capacity-building.

²⁸ In May 2025, tripartite representatives from 14 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean agreed to create a regional mechanism for the mutual recognition of vocational skills certification between countries. This is a specific tool, implemented under the technical secretariat of the Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training (ILO-CINTERFOR), that aims to promote socio-economic integration, equal opportunities and decent work in contexts of mobility.

28. In this regard, the region has a key tool: **the Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training (ILO-CINTERFOR)**, which coordinates and revitalizes different specialist collaborative networks that address the most innovative and strategic aspects of vocational training.
29. With regard to **social protection**, the Americas region is in a more favourable position than others: in Latin America and the Caribbean, 61.2 per cent of the population receives at least one social protection cash benefit, rising to 80.6 per cent in Northern America.²⁹ However, this regional average conceals wide gaps between countries, with coverage ranging from 6.6 per cent in Haiti to 95 per cent in Uruguay.
30. Over the last century, the region has developed a mixed structure of contributory and non-contributory programmes and has extended coverage to a significant proportion of the population. Nevertheless, gaps persist, particularly for certain groups, such as workers in the informal economy. In Latin America and the Caribbean, women receive lower pensions than men; the gap exceeds 40 per cent in some countries in the region. To address these differences and provide comprehensive social protection, there is a vital need to strengthen funding sources, improve coordination between policies and programmes and increase investment in social protection systems.
31. In Northern America, the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic saw **real wages** increase suddenly owing to a “composition effect” (the average wage increased because most of the workers who lost their jobs were low-paid wage employees). Real wage growth then stagnated in 2021, fell by 3 per cent in 2022 owing to inflation, remained unchanged in 2023 and increased slightly by 0.3 per cent in 2024. In Latin America and the Caribbean, real wage growth has been volatile since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, real wages increased by 2.7 per cent, reflecting a strong composition effect, as in Northern America. Real wage growth in the region rallied to 1.7 per cent in 2023 and decelerated slightly to 1.5 per cent in 2024.³⁰ In the post-pandemic period, most countries in Latin America adjusted their minimum wages to cover price increases and maintain purchasing power. It is estimated that the real value of the minimum wage in the third quarter of 2024 was lower than in the first quarter of 2019 in just 4 of the 17 countries for which information is available. Wages demonstrate clearly the nature of the growth–employment nexus. For many workers, wage levels are the difference between living in poverty or not. Therefore, enterprises and workers are increasingly discussing the operationalization of the concept of living wages as a means to ensure decent work, reduce poverty and foster a mutually supportive relationship between wages and sustained economic growth.³¹

1.1.4. Policy coherence for promoting fair transitions

32. Institutionalized tripartite social dialogue at all levels must contribute to driving coherent, integrated policies that promote decent work using a human-centred approach. The active participation of actors from the world of work is vital at all stages of the policy cycle, particularly given the profound transformations that are affecting the world of work.
33. **Technological change** is the transformative force that has garnered most attention in recent years and will continue to have a profound influence on the growth–employment–rights nexus. Digitalization and emerging technologies, such as generative artificial intelligence (AI), are

²⁹ ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2024–26: Universal Social Protection for Climate Action and a Just Transition*, 2024, 55.

³⁰ ILO, *Global Wage Report 2024–25: Is Wage Inequality Decreasing Globally?*, 2024, 14.

³¹ For more information, see “Living Wages”.

evolving and expanding rapidly. This dynamic is creating expectations as to their potential for stimulating productivity and economic growth, as well as concerns about their impact on labour relations and the creation or destruction of jobs. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the lack of digital infrastructure could limit the impact of these technologies, while digital divides between regions within countries could deepen inequalities. It is estimated that between 26 and 38 per cent of jobs in Latin America and the Caribbean are exposed in some way to generative AI, although that does not imply full automation. Between 2 and 5 per cent of jobs today are at risk of being fully automated by these technologies.³² Governments, in consultation with the social partners, must therefore implement policies that protect jobs, boost productivity and maximize the transformative potential of generative AI to promote more inclusive and sustainable growth.

34. The ILO has warned repeatedly of the profound consequences of **climate change**, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation for the world of work.³³ These phenomena have an effect not only on income and livelihoods, but also on progress towards fairer, more inclusive societies. The region of Latin America and the Caribbean is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change; indeed, most of its countries have suffered the effects of hurricanes, floods and extreme heatwaves. It is estimated that the region consumes more resources and generates more waste than is proportional to its population and that its natural wealth is being lost through environmental degradation.³⁴ Many jobs depend on healthy ecosystems. In the Caribbean, more than 40 per cent of total jobs are linked to the tourism sector, which generates around 33 per cent of gross domestic product and is highly vulnerable to climate crises. Moreover, as climate change intensifies, workers are increasingly exposed to dangers such as excessive heat.³⁵ It is important to tackle these challenges for the benefit of people and planet. Nevertheless, to ensure that these benefits reach everyone fairly and inclusively, there is a need for coherent, integrated policies that promote a just transition to environmentally sustainable economies, leaving no one behind. To that end, economic, social and environmental (decarbonization and ecological transition models) policy dimensions must be integrated with a gender perspective so that the transition does not reproduce persistent gender inequalities.
35. In recent years, the region of Latin America and the Caribbean has experienced an acceleration in the **demographic transition** owing to the sustained reduction in mortality and fertility. It is estimated that ten countries have already entered the advanced stage of population ageing,³⁶ and it is predicted that by 2050, the over 60s will represent 25 per cent of the total population (183 million persons); that is, there will be 2.1 times more older persons than today. Women's greater participation in the labour market and the increased number of workers remaining in work beyond the statutory retirement age are resulting in a growing labour force and greater pressures on the labour market. The average labour participation rate of persons aged over 65 years in 2023 was 40.5 per cent for men and 19.3 per cent for women. These trends reinforce the need to reopen the discussions on comprehensive care systems, the design of labour policies and lifelong vocational training policies adapted to different age groups, and the strengthening

³² Paweł Gmyrek, Hernan Winkler and Santiago Garganta, *Buffer or Bottleneck? Employment Exposure to Generative AI and the Digital Divide in Latin America*, ILO Working Paper 121 (ILO and the World Bank, 2024), 22.

³³ ILO, *Resolution concerning a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all*, International Labour Conference, 111th Session, 2023.

³⁴ Fabio Bertranou and Sonia Gontero, *Trabajo, empleo, protección laboral y social en América Latina y el Caribe, 1994-2024* (ILO, 2024), 44 (only available in Spanish).

³⁵ Andreas Flouris et al., eds, *Heat at Work: Implications for Safety and Health – A Global Review of the Science, Policy and Practice* (ILO, 2024).

³⁶ Older adults make up more than 21 per cent of the populations of Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Guadeloupe, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay.

of social security.³⁷ By 2035, investment in care in the region could create 32 million direct jobs (81 per cent of which filled by women) in universal early childcare services and long-term care services and could lead to the creation of 10.5 million additional jobs.³⁸ In Northern America, structural factors such as population ageing, the predicted fall in immigration and mismatches between skills and labour demand will also place long-term pressures on labour markets.³⁹

36. These transformations alone will not determine specific outcomes. Opportunities and risks will depend on the decisions made in the areas of policies and institutions, and how they are made. Institutionalized tripartite social dialogue and the application of international labour standards are therefore vital. For that reason, there is a pressing need to make progress towards inclusive and effective labour governance that consolidates the growth–employment–rights nexus and facilitates just transitions that promote sustainable, fair growth for all in the region.

1.1.5. Inclusive and effective labour governance

1.1.5.1. Ratification and effective application of international labour standards

37. The consolidation of inclusive and effective labour governance requires the strengthening of national laws and regulations in accordance with international labour standards through the ratification of relevant Conventions and their effective application. This section presents an overview of the current status of the ratification and application of international labour standards in the region.
38. **Ratifications** in the Americas make up 21 per cent of the global total, meaning that the region is in second place worldwide with regard to the average number of Conventions in force per country. Almost all countries in the region have ratified the **fundamental Conventions** on freedom of association, discrimination, child labour and forced labour.⁴⁰ In the area of occupational safety and health, however, 40 per cent of countries have ratified the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), while just nine countries have ratified the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187).⁴¹ Lastly, just ten countries have ratified the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930. Since the last American Regional Meeting in 2018, **16 new ratifications** of fundamental instruments have been recorded. They include seven ratifications of the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930; four of Convention No. 187; three of Convention No. 155; one of the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98); and one of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138).
39. In comparison with the fundamental Conventions, there is a relatively low rate of ratification of the four **governance Conventions**. A large majority of countries have ratified the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), and the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81). More than two thirds of countries have ratified the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122), and one third have ratified the Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129). In the last seven years, **three new ratifications** of

³⁷ Bertranou and Gontero, 23.

³⁸ ECLAC and ILO, *Time for Care in Latin America and the Caribbean: Towards Social and Gender Co-Responsibility*, Gender Equality Bulletin No. 4, 2025, 2.

³⁹ ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2025*, 26.

⁴⁰ For more information on the ratification of Conventions by countries in the region, see: [NORMLEX: Information System on International Labour Standards](#).

⁴¹ The ILO has launched a [Global Ratification Campaign on C155 and C187](#).

governance Conventions have been recorded: two of Convention No. 129 and one of Convention No. 81.

40. With regard to the **effective application of international labour standards**, progress has been made in a considerable number of countries under the **regular reporting cycle**, although some challenges remain. Between 2018 and 2024, the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) received 1,774 reports from States in the region under article 22 of the ILO Constitution.⁴² After analysing these reports while considering the numerous observations made by employers' and workers' organizations, the CEACR highlighted with satisfaction 20 **cases of progress** in countries in the region.⁴³
41. This progress was observed in fundamental areas such as occupational safety and health, combating forced labour and child labour, the promotion of equality, freedom of association, collective bargaining, and improvements to labour inspection systems, tripartite consultation mechanisms, social security, private employment agencies and maritime labour conditions.
42. Between 2018 and 2025, the Committee on the Application of Standards of the International Labour Conference examined 38 **individual cases** relating to 13 countries in the region.⁴⁴ Most related to the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), which represented 40 per cent of the total. Six of those cases were referred to the Committee directly by the CEACR, in accordance with its mandate.⁴⁵
43. With regard to the **special procedures**, Latin America occupies a prominent position owing to the high volume of representations and complaints emanating from the region, which is significantly higher than for other regions. From its creation in 1951 until 2024, the **Committee on Freedom of Association** received a total of 3,487 cases, of which approximately half came from Latin American countries. This trend has increased recently: in 2024, 61 per cent of the complaints received by the Committee on Freedom of Association originated in the region.⁴⁶
44. Furthermore, in 2024 the Committee observed with interest or satisfaction the progress made during this period and welcomed various positive developments. Specifically, of a total of 15 cases of progress, 10 came from Latin America.⁴⁷
45. Between 2018 and 2023, there were 47 **representations** under article 24 of the ILO Constitution, almost half of which were submitted from Latin America.⁴⁸ Of the 34 representations currently under consideration, 22 come from 8 Latin American countries.⁴⁹ The issues addressed most

⁴² This is equivalent to 56 per cent of all requested reports. Latin America and the Caribbean was consequently in third place globally in terms of required reports and responses received.

⁴³ Argentina, Bahamas, Belize, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay.

⁴⁴ Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay and Peru.

⁴⁵ The cases examined between 2018 and 2025 were: Ecuador, Convention No. 98 (2025); Paraguay, Convention No. 81 (2024); Nicaragua, Conventions Nos 87 and 111 (2023); Nicaragua, Convention No. 117 (2019); Honduras, Convention No. 87 (2018); and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Convention No. 138 (2018).

⁴⁶ ILO, *Presentation of the Committee on Freedom of Association Annual Report for the Year 2024*, GB.353/INS/14/1(Add.1), 2025, figures 1 and 4.

⁴⁷ GB.353/INS/14/1(Add.1), figure 17.

⁴⁸ ILO, *Work Plan on the Strengthening of the Supervisory System: Review of the Arrangements to Allow for Optional Voluntary Conciliation and Other Measures Introduced on a Trial Basis concerning the Operation of Representations Submitted under Article 24 of the ILO Constitution and Consideration of Proposals to Streamline Reporting under Article 22*, GB.349/INS/7, 2023, figure 2.

⁴⁹ Argentina (4), Brazil (1), Chile (10), Colombia (1), Costa Rica (1), Ecuador (1), Mexico (1), Uruguay (3). ILO NORMLEX, *Representations (Art. 24) by status* [accessed on 16 April 2025].

frequently in these representations are **freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, occupational safety and health, discrimination and the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples.**

46. Three of the four **complaints** currently being considered under article 26 of the ILO Constitution originated in Latin America (Chile, Guatemala and Nicaragua). At the same time, the ILO Governing Body is continuing to monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry that considered the complaint submitted in 2015 against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on its application of the Minimum Wage-Fixing Machinery Convention, 1928 (No. 26), the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144).⁵⁰
47. In recent years, several countries have requested the ILO's technical assistance in reviewing and reforming their labour legislation, often in response to recommendations made by the Organization's supervisory bodies. However, these legislative reforms face complex challenges that go beyond mere legal analysis. There is a vital need for these processes to be undertaken by means of broad tripartite social dialogue.
48. Latin America and the Caribbean is home to more than 54 million persons belonging to **indigenous and tribal peoples**, who represent 8.5 per cent of the region's total population; this is the highest proportion of all the world's regions. Latin America and the Caribbean also has the highest number of ratifications of the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169). Nevertheless, 35 years on from the adoption of the Convention in 1989, the data confirms that there are still significant challenges in terms of inequality that countries must address.⁵¹ The high number of comments made by the CEACR and of complaints submitted in relation to the application of Convention No. 169 demonstrates the need to increase the supervisory system's effectiveness through systematic monitoring using a comprehensive, multidisciplinary and country-centred approach.

1.1.5.2. Respect for and effective application of the fundamental principles and rights at work

49. Respect for the fundamental principles and rights at work is a priority issue in a region with particularly high rates of inequality, discrimination and exclusion.
50. **Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.** Employers' and workers' organizations have repeatedly pointed out that the violation of these fundamental rights has weakened the labour relations system in some countries. The challenges most frequently addressed by the ILO supervisory bodies in relation to the region include the full guarantee of civil and political rights (particularly so that social dialogue and the rights and freedoms of employers' and workers' organizations may be exercised in a climate free from any form of violence and intimidation), the absence of adequate protection from anti-union discrimination

⁵⁰ ILO, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry Appointed to Consider the Complaint Alleging the Non-Observance by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela of Conventions Nos 26, 87 and 144, Made under Article 26 of the ILO Constitution by Several Delegates to the 104th Session (2015) of the International Labour Conference*, GB.337/INS/8, 2019; and *Developments in the Full Implementation by the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela of the Agreed Plan of Action to Give Effect to the Recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry in Respect of Conventions Nos 26, 87 and 144*, GB.353/INS/8(Rev. 1), 2025.

⁵¹ Indigenous persons currently make up almost 30 per cent of persons living in extreme poverty in the region and are almost three times more likely to live in extreme poverty than non-indigenous persons. The average monthly income gap between the indigenous and non-indigenous populations in 2021 was 33 per cent, reaching up to 42 per cent in rural areas.

(including adequate sanction and compensation mechanisms and rapid and effective proceedings) and the insufficient promotion, in both legislation and practice, of collective bargaining.

51. Although Latin America and the Caribbean is the region in relation to which the highest number of complaints has been submitted to the ILO's supervisory bodies, particularly the Committee on Freedom of Association, that does not mean that violations of trade union rights are more common than elsewhere. It does, however, illustrate the need to strengthen trust in the national institutions responsible for promoting and enforcing labour legislation and international labour standards. Moreover, it is important to understand the causes of these complaints and to encourage national responses to bring about positive change, supporting and strengthening the effective functioning of social dialogue institutions. The ILO has systematically increased its support for constituents in the area of social dialogue and labour relations to improve compliance with international labour standards (particularly those relating to freedom of association and collective bargaining), strengthening its technical assistance in the area of social dialogue and conflict resolution⁵² through the Regional Initiative for the Strengthening of Social Dialogue and Collective Labour Relations in Latin America and the Caribbean.⁵³
52. **Elimination of child labour.** The ILO's most recent estimates demonstrate that, between 2016 and 2024, there was a 30.5 per cent fall in the total number of children and adolescents in child labour in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2024, it was estimated that there were 7.3 million children and adolescents in child labour in the region. Of these, 4.7 million were undertaking hazardous work, equivalent to 3.5 per cent of the global total.⁵⁴ Significant challenges remain. The Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour regional initiative demonstrates that, despite the COVID-19 pandemic and structural challenges, countries are continuing to make progress on the commitments they have made. The work undertaken jointly by governments and employers' and workers' organizations has allowed progress to be maintained, but it must be stepped up. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean can demonstrate to the world that, with a regional vision and national and tripartite commitment, eliminating child labour is possible.
53. **Elimination of forced labour.** New estimates by the ILO show that there are more than 3,593,000 persons in forced labour in the Americas, a rate of 3.5 persons per thousand inhabitants. Migrants' representation in that group is far greater than in the total active population. Women in forced labour are much more likely than their male counterparts to be in domestic work, while men in forced labour are much more likely to be in the construction sector.⁵⁵
54. **Elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.** In recent decades, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have achieved progress in women's rights and in care work (both paid and unpaid). Nevertheless, significant challenges remain with regard to women's entry into and continuation and progression in employment and occupation. In the region, the care distribution gap continues to be one of the main drivers of the gender inequality that women suffer at home and in the labour market. Although most countries in the region have

⁵² Six countries in the region have created bodies dedicated to resolving conflicts linked to international labour standards: Colombia (2000), Panama (2012), Dominican Republic (2016), Honduras (2018), Guatemala (2018) and Argentina (2019).

⁵³ The Initiative seeks to strengthen understanding of the existing challenges in labour relations models and conflicts related to standards at the national and regional levels with a view to promoting a culture of mature, constructive social dialogue. For more information, see: [Regional Initiative for the Strengthening of Social Dialogue and Collective Labour Relations in Latin America and the Caribbean](#).

⁵⁴ ILO and UNICEF, *Child Labour: Global Estimates 2024, Trends and the Road Forward*, 2025, 54–56.

⁵⁵ ILO, Walk Free and the International Organization for Migration, *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage*, 2022, table 2 and p. 4.

ratified the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), and made headway in their national normative frameworks, progress towards closing the wage gap has been slow. It should also be noted that 12 of the 50 ratifications of the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), have been by countries in the region.

55. In June 2022, the governments, employers and workers meeting at the International Labour Conference added the right to a **safe and healthy working environment** to the fundamental principles and rights at work.⁵⁶ According to the most recent estimates of the ILO and the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 170,000 work-related deaths occur in the Americas each year.⁵⁷ The three main occupational risk factors that contribute to this elevated number of deaths are long working hours, occupational injuries, and occupational exposure to particulate matter, gases and fumes.⁵⁸ The ratification of the occupational safety and health Conventions represents Member States' formal commitment before the international community to addressing the issue, and social dialogue also plays a vital role. Since 2010, around one third of countries have adopted or revised a national occupational safety and health policy or programme.⁵⁹ However, an updated policy or programme is in force in just six countries.

1.1.5.3. Labour administration and inspection

56. The promotion of decent work, social dialogue, good governance and sustainable enterprises requires modern labour administrations that are able to respond to the challenges brought about by transformations in the world of work.
57. Labour administration systems, including inspection services, play a key role in promoting decent work, since they ensure compliance with standards in workplaces. They contribute to creating a stable normative environment for companies – particularly small and medium-sized enterprises – as well as stimulating economic growth and increasing competitiveness.⁶⁰
58. The high rate of informality in Latin America and the Caribbean poses an additional challenge for labour administrations and public labour inspection services. Traditional and emerging labour risks in a world of work in constant transformation are another challenge that labour inspectorates must face up to in order to ensure safe and healthy work environments.
59. Inspection systems are increasingly undertaking proactive inspections based on strategic and operational inspection programmes or plans that set periodic priorities and identify sectors, companies and workplaces that will be inspected. Another recent trend is the use of information and communication technologies, including AI,⁶¹ for inspection purposes.
60. For employers and workers, there is an urgent need for labour administrations and inspectorates to define clear, effective, efficient and predictable procedures that help strengthen labour market governance.

⁵⁶ Conventions Nos 155 and 187 were classified as fundamental Conventions as a result.

⁵⁷ WHO and ILO, *WHO/ILO Joint Estimates of the Work-Related Burden of Disease and Injury, 2000–2016*, 2021, Annex 3.

⁵⁸ ILO, *Overview of Occupational Safety and Health in Latin America and the Caribbean*, Regional Information Note, 2023, 8.

⁵⁹ Tzvetomira Radoslavova, *Visión de conjunto de las políticas y programas nacionales de seguridad y salud en el trabajo en América Latina y el Caribe* (ILO, 2024), figure 4 (only available in Spanish).

⁶⁰ Carmen Bueno, *El marco normativo internacional de la inspección del trabajo. Su contribución a los desafíos laborales en América Latina* (ILO, 2024, 16) (only available in Spanish).

⁶¹ Bueno, 59.

1.1.5.4. Access to labour justice: Prevention and resolution of labour disputes

61. There have been significant changes to arrangements for access to labour justice in several countries to counter delays in proceedings and an inability to enforce labour court decisions. Employers and workers require judicial and non-judicial labour dispute prevention and resolution procedures that are aligned with the principles of effectiveness in access to justice.⁶²
62. The concept of “effective” access to labour justice and effectiveness of labour dispute prevention and resolution are drawn from ILO standards. The technical assistance provided by the ILO over the last decade has been based on the premise that national circumstances are key in determining the performance of institutions responsible for resolving both individual and collective labour disputes in the different legal and labour relations systems. The “effectiveness principles” that apply to these institutions are set out in the ILO’s diagnostic tool for self-assessing the effectiveness of labour dispute prevention and resolution institutions,⁶³ introduced in 2023, which uses them as evaluation criteria.⁶⁴
63. Effective and accessible labour justice systems are a pillar of the rule of law, and their promotion is vital to the exercise of labour rights and the effective application of international labour standards, as well as to ensuring fair, robust and equitable labour relations.

1.1.5.5. Social dialogue and governance of the world of work and production

64. The structural challenges that are manifested in decent work deficits in Latin America and the Caribbean and the profound transformations in the world of work highlight the importance, now more than ever, of social dialogue. Social dialogue is an essential ingredient in strengthening the growth–employment–rights nexus, which takes on particular relevance in times of crisis, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the structural transformations occurring in labour markets pose an additional challenge to social dialogue and the tripartite actors.
65. Social dialogue is a means of fostering the democratic, legitimate and broad participation of the tripartite actors in the governance of the social and economic conditions that affect work and employment. It recognizes that these actors may have different interests that must be balanced to reach binding, credible agreements and provide sufficient accountability. Additionally, social dialogue aims to ensure respect for the fundamental principles and rights at work and enjoys the participation of governments and representative national and/or sectoral employers’ and workers’ organizations with a membership base and a mandate, which are indispensable safeguards for effective social dialogue.⁶⁵ There is a vital need for employers’ and workers’ organizations to be robust, independent and representative, just as there is a vital need for respect for fundamental rights and freedoms at work, particularly freedom of association.

⁶² Ten of these principles apply to judicial and non-judicial institutions: efficiency, speediness, accessibility, fairness, equality, accountability, independence, impartiality, professionalism and enforcement. Three additional principles apply specifically to non-judicial institutions: voluntarism, confidentiality and prevention.

⁶³ ILO, *Access to Labour Justice: A Diagnostic Tool for Self-Assessing the Effectiveness of Labour Dispute Prevention and Resolution*, 2023.

⁶⁴ The tool was tested in September 2022 in the Employment Rights Tribunal of Barbados and in the Federal Conciliation and Labour Registration Centre of Mexico. In December 2022, it was also used in the labour tribunals of the Mexican states of Guanajuato, San Luis Potosí, Chiapas, Quintana Roo and Oaxaca. In October 2024, the tool was used in the Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago and in the Department of Labour of Grenada.

⁶⁵ ILO, *Social Dialogue Report 2024: Peak-Level Social Dialogue for Economic Development and Social Progress*, 2024, 6.

1.2. Vision for the future: Strengthening the growth–employment–rights nexus to make progress towards social justice

66. We live in a world marked by uncertainty and rapid transformation. The region of the Americas is at an historic crossroads. The decisions adopted now will determine whether progress is made towards a more just, inclusive and sustainable development model, or whether the inequalities that have limited the region's collective potential will be perpetuated. This section proposes a vision for the future that does not start from scratch, but is based on lessons learned, commitments made and opportunities that have emerged in the midst of crises.
67. Social justice is not an abstract aspiration; it is an urgent and tangible need. It is the principle that must guide economic, social and labour policies. And, above all, it is a promise that must be kept to the people who expect work to be a source of dignity, stability and progress. It is therefore necessary to strengthen the nexus of growth–employment–rights, which are inseparable and mutually reinforcing concepts.
68. As history has shown, economic growth does not always result in the common good, but can coexist with informality, exclusion and the erosion of rights. The challenge, therefore, is not only to grow, but to grow with rights, fairness, inclusion, productive employment and decent work, as well as institutions that guarantee democratic participation. That is the essence of the new social contract that the ILO is proposing: a human-centred contract that recognizes the value of work in all its forms and promotes an economy at the service of human dignity.
69. Furthermore, the future of work in the region will be determined by how three significant transitions are addressed: the digital, ecological and demographic transitions. Each brings with it risks, but also opportunities to strengthen the growth–employment–rights nexus.
70. The digital transition may increase productivity and create new jobs, but it may also deepen inequalities unless universal connectivity, digital skills training and the protection of rights in digital environments are guaranteed.
71. The ecological transition is unavoidable. Climate change is already affecting the health, productivity and livelihoods of millions of people. However, it is also paving the way to a just transition to a green economy that could create millions of decent jobs if managed with social justice and accompanied by active training policies, social protection and social dialogue.
72. The demographic transition poses different challenges in each country. While some face population ageing, others have a majority of young persons who lack access to quality jobs. Both situations require integrated policies that promote lifelong learning, policies and decent jobs in the care economy, and the inclusion of all age groups in the labour market.
73. As a region of both origin and destination for multinational enterprises, the Americas is connected to the global economy through a range of trade and investment agreements that support regional and global flows of trade and foreign investment. This connection offers opportunities for decent work and inclusive economic growth, provided that it is accompanied by suitable public policies and strong coherence among economic, environmental and social development priorities, and measures that promote responsible business conduct.
74. As indicated in the report to the International Labour Conference in 2025, democracy is not just a political system: it is a way of organizing our life together, taking collective decisions and ensuring that no one is left behind. In the world of work, democracy is expressed through social dialogue, the participation of the social partners and the ability to build lasting consensus.

75. Social dialogue is not a privilege; it is a necessity. It is the space where interests are reconciled, conflict is anticipated and prevented, and effective policies are designed. In times of crisis, social dialogue is key to protecting jobs, incomes and enterprises. In times of transformation, it will be even more necessary so as to ensure that transitions are just and decisions are taken with the people, rather than from the top down.
76. Therefore, social dialogue institutions must be strengthened, freedom of association guaranteed and collective bargaining promoted at all levels. Moreover, there is a need to broaden the participation of women and vulnerable groups such as young persons, indigenous peoples and workers in the informal and rural economy, recognizing their right to be heard in decisions affecting them. Additionally, enabling environments for the creation and development of sustainable enterprises that create opportunities for productive employment and decent work for all must be promoted.
77. If this vision is to be translated into real change, an ambitious, coherent and human-centred agenda for action is required.
78. This vision for the future recognizes the region's challenges, but also its capacities. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have a rich tradition of fighting for labour rights, with democratic institutions that, despite their flaws, are spaces for citizens' participation.
79. Social justice is not a utopia. It is a shared responsibility. It is the destination that calls to us and the commitment that we must renew. Because there cannot be lasting peace without social justice, nor social justice without decent work.
80. The future is in our hands, and the time to act is now.

► 2. Measures to implement the policy priorities established in the Panama Declaration for 2018–25

81. The 19th American Regional Meeting, held from 2 to 5 October 2018, culminated in the adoption of the **Panama Declaration for the ILO Centenary: The future of work in the Americas**. The Declaration sets out the necessary conditions for harnessing the potential of the future of work while leaving no one behind and establishes 17 policy priorities for building a better future of work.
82. This part of the report provides a non-exhaustive summary of the main measures reported by ILO constituents and the Office to implement the Declaration's 17 policy priorities between 2018 and 2025.⁶⁶ It also refers to the measures adopted by ILO constituents and the Office to respond to challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and to the rapid technological, demographic, climate and geopolitical transformations mentioned in Part I.

2.1. Productive development policies

83. Among the productive development policies implemented in the region, progress was made in promoting the **productivity and growth of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises**. This includes the adoption of the Supply and Public Procurement Act No. 7021 of 2021 (Paraguay) and an agreement with the National Industrial Learning Service to improve productivity in the textile sector using the Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises (SCORE) methodology (Brazil). This methodology was also applied in actions taken in Colombia, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic.
84. The **integration of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises into value chains was improved and their inclusion in production linkages was increased** in some sectoral plans (cocoa and plaster in Brazil, avocado in Peru, mango in Haiti and rural community tourism in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, for example). **Cluster policies** included the introduction of a tripartite round table for the Caribbean region by Costa Rica. A plan to improve the business environment and productivity was implemented in Suriname.

2.2. Policies to promote an enabling environment for the creation and development of enterprises

85. In accordance with the resolution concerning the promotion of sustainable enterprises adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2007, **national action plans on business and human rights** were designed (Argentina, Chile and Peru) and sustainability plans linked to the SCORE methodology (Plurinational State of Bolivia).
86. Programmes addressing productivity and business sustainability were implemented, such as SCORE (see section 2.1 above), *Mi Negocio Verde* [My Green Business] (Ecuador), the Start and Improve Your Business Programme (Colombia, Ecuador and Honduras) and Think.Coop and

⁶⁶ Part II of this report is based on the results published in the **ILO's Programme Implementation Reports** between 2018 and 2025, reorganized according to the 17 policy priorities set out in the Panama Declaration.

Start.Coop to promote cooperatives (Ecuador, Mexico and Peru). Business digitalization initiatives were also launched (Argentina and Honduras).

87. Training activities aimed at employers' organizations were undertaken in the areas of productivity and business digitalization at the regional level.

2.3. Policies to promote respect for the fundamental principles and rights at work ⁶⁷

88. Seven countries ratified the Protocol of 2014 to the **Forced Labour** Convention, 1930 (Antigua and Barbuda, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru and Suriname). Furthermore, plans to combat forced labour (Peru), pilot programmes on reintegrating victims of forced labour and trafficking in persons into the labour market (Peru) and laws against trafficking in persons (El Salvador) were adopted.
89. Ratifications were registered of: the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187) (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Saint Lucia and Uruguay); the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155) (Barbados, Chile and Saint Lucia); the Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129) (Panama and Suriname); the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81) (Canada); the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98) (Mexico); and the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) (Saint Lucia). With regard to national legislation, legislative compendiums were published (Nicaragua), national occupational safety and health profiles and plans were drawn up (Honduras) and specific measures to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic were adopted in multiple countries.
90. A regional forum for tripartite collaboration was created to exchange knowledge, tools and experience of developing national occupational safety and health systems.
91. With regard to **labour inspection**, regional regulations and strategies (Honduras), sectoral inspection protocols (Colombia), comprehensive training plans (Argentina) and sectoral inspection guides (Costa Rica) were adopted.
92. The **Regional Initiative for the Strengthening of Social Dialogue and Collective Labour Relations in Latin America and the Caribbean** was launched in 2024. Regarding **conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms**, the Special Committee for the Handling of Conflicts referred to the ILO (Colombia), an early warning system (Colombia) and the use of voluntary conciliation (Chile) were strengthened. In the Caribbean, a framework was adopted to promote effective labour justice.

2.4. Policies to promote respect for freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining

93. Regarding the promotion and protection of, and respect for, the exercise of trade union activity, measures were adopted to increase membership among workers (Colombia and Peru) and to encourage trade union pluralism and membership (Mexico). Furthermore, a digital platform to closely monitor labour reform was launched (Mexico), the unionization of women domestic workers was promoted (Colombia and Paraguay), and the use of replacement workers during strikes was prevented (Canada).

⁶⁷ See also the sections on freedom of association (2.4.), the elimination of child labour (2.14.) and the elimination of discrimination (2.15.).

94. Measures were adopted to boost collective bargaining (Colombia); manuals for employers on collective labour relations were published (Colombia); the Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154), was ratified (El Salvador); and trade union file information systems were created (Brazil and Colombia). Moreover, a plan was implemented to strengthen the mandate of the Ministry of Labour in the areas of freedom of association, compliance with the road map, labour legislation and conflict resolution (Guatemala). Lastly, a direct contacts mission regarding the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), was undertaken (Peru).

2.5. Policies to promote the transition to the formal economy

95. Efforts were made to implement a series of initiatives to promote formalization and prevent informalization of enterprises (El Salvador, Honduras and Paraguay), develop action plans for formalization in certain sectors (agriculture and fishing in Jamaica) and create local-level formalization strategies and the regulation of paid domestic work (Peru). Additionally, relevant international labour standards were promoted through the ratification of the Home Work Convention, 1996 (No. 177), (Antigua and Barbuda) and the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), (Grenada and Mexico). Awareness was raised of the causes of labour informality and policies to reduce it, and improvements were made to the measurement of informality.
96. The Strategy for the Promotion of Formalization in Latin America and the Caribbean 2024–30 (FORLAC 2.0) was launched in 2024 to provide an integrated policy approach in accordance with the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204). Moreover, regional partnerships with the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the European Commission and the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean were strengthened to draw up a joint formalization programme.

2.6. Workforce development policies

97. The Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training (ILO-CINTERFOR) promotes the adaptation of training to market demands, the implementation of labour skills certification systems and the modernization of vocational training.
98. Support was given to the **strengthening of vocational training systems** through the creation of the National Qualifications System (Colombia), the introduction of a national digital skills training programme (Colombia), the adoption of the National Workforce Planning Strategy (Chile), the adoption of the National Technical and Vocational Education and Training Policy (Barbados), the adoption of the National Strategy on Employability and Human Talent (Costa Rica), the development of the National Apprenticeship Policy (Bahamas), the inclusion of vocational training dimensions in industrial policy (Plurinational State of Bolivia) and the establishment of a road map for equal opportunities in vocational training (Panama), among other measures.
99. Regional networks were created for work on matters such as dual training, social dialogue and training, skills certification for migrants, and the digital transformation.

2.7. Policies to promote environmental sustainability and to address the employment impacts of climate change

100. The region promoted measures to **include the employment impacts of climate change in national plans** and high-level committees (Mexico and Peru).

101. Since the Caribbean island States are the most exposed to the effects of climate change, trade union action in response to disasters was strengthened through reports, training and strategic crisis and disaster response and recovery plans (Dominica and Saint Lucia). Action aimed at the business sector was also undertaken (Haiti and Trinidad and Tobago) through reports, services for companies and forums for dialogue to respond to crises and disasters.

2.8. Policies to promote equal opportunities

102. **As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, countries had to adopt measures to protect employment and revitalize economies.** For example, support was given to vulnerable sectors (Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago), formal employment support programmes were implemented (Colombia), employment reactivation programmes were introduced (Paraguay), and proposals on promoting decent work were made by employers (Peru) and workers (Argentina). Moreover, road maps were implemented to revitalize tourism (Ecuador) and methodologies were devised for identifying the impacts of the pandemic effect on employment (Brazil).
103. The pandemic also necessitated adaptations to statistical information systems (Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay), public employment services (Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico and Paraguay) and labour mediation (Costa Rica, Colombia at the district level, and Paraguay). Registers and job advertisements were also digitized to improve the institutional response.
104. With regard to **employment policies**, a national plan was adopted (Peru), a specialist committee for the implementation of the national employment policy was established (Guatemala) and national employment units were created (Panama and Paraguay).
105. Labour market information systems were also implemented (Chile, El Salvador and Uruguay), as were labour market analysis methodologies (El Salvador).

2.9. Wage policies

106. There was progress in setting minimum wages and reducing the gender wage gap (see section 2.16.). Institutional wage policy frameworks were strengthened through the adoption of national policies (Guatemala), technical improvements and corrections to wage adjustment mechanisms (Costa Rica) and the extension of minimum wage coverage to groups of workers (Dominica). Moreover, the Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131), was ratified by Suriname.

2.10. Policies to respond to the new and diverse forms of employment

107. Progress was made in the **regulation of remote working and in diagnostic analyses of digital platform work**, in part as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Regulations were adopted on conditions for safety and health in teleworking (Mexico), and rights were established in relation to teleworking (Uruguay). Proposals were made for harmonizing legislation on remote work (Colombia), and recommendations were made on conditions for work via digital platforms (Argentina, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Paraguay). For the first time, questions on platform workers were included in statistical surveys (Chile).

2.11. Social protection policies

108. Progress was made in strengthening social protection through **normative reforms, the extension of coverage, institutional improvements and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic**. Legislation was adopted in the areas of employment protection, guaranteed universal pensions and non-contributory programmes (Chile). Pension reforms were adopted to adapt national legislation to the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), (Colombia), and measures were taken to extend social security to domestic workers (Mexico), extend pensions for older adults (Mexico) and broaden benefits (Paraguay). Furthermore, the Office of the Superintendent for Retirement and Pensions was established in Paraguay and the Joint Pension System was created in Uruguay.
109. Moreover, the number of countries to have ratified Convention No. 102 increased following ratifications by El Salvador, Paraguay and Suriname.
110. Steps were taken towards **technical and financial sustainability** through actuarial studies and evaluations (Ecuador, Guyana, Honduras, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago) and the reform of the Pensions Saving System (El Salvador).
111. During the COVID-19 pandemic, new social protection strategies were designed (Ecuador), unemployment insurance was introduced (Caribbean countries) and improvements were made to the statistics system (Costa Rica and Ecuador).

2.12. Policies to promote a just transition

112. Countries in the region made progress in promoting the framework of the conclusions concerning achieving decent work, green jobs and sustainable development.
113. The just transition was included in nationally determined contributions to the global response to climate change (Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Costa Rica), green jobs and just transition measures were included in development plans (Colombia and Mexico), and proposals for the integration of indigenous peoples into green jobs initiatives were drawn up (Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil and Colombia). Green jobs and entrepreneurship programmes were created (Argentina and Mexico), evaluation criteria for green jobs were defined (Peru) and training was offered on e-waste (Peru) and rural tourism (Plurinational State of Bolivia).
114. Additionally, green hydrogen strategies were launched (Argentina) and updates relating to oil and gas were undertaken in the drafting of the Just Transition Strategy (Colombia).

2.13. Policies to foster youth employment

115. Strategies were adopted on youth employability (Costa Rica) and youth employment (El Salvador and Guatemala), and new labour market integration services were established at the local level (Honduras). A tripartite mechanism to evaluate the impact of youth employment policies was established (Chile), diagnostic studies of groups of young persons were undertaken (Colombia and Panama), and tools for verifying young persons' working conditions were designed (Colombia). Moreover, the ILO held an Ideathon for Social Justice, in which young people from 20 countries took part.

2.14. Policies on the elimination of child labour

116. The year 2024 marked a decade of tripartite work to eliminate child labour in the region under the Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour regional initiative.

117. Various countries adopted national strategies (Bahamas, Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras and Paraguay), adopted or updated protocols on the prevention and elimination of child labour (Dominican Republic and Mexico), reinstated regional committees (Peru), created public–private networks against child labour (Panama) and promoted awareness-raising campaigns (Argentina).
118. In terms of prevention methodologies, the Child Labour Risk Identification Model was implemented (Brazil, Costa Rica and Jamaica), modules on the prevention and elimination of child labour and protection of adolescent labour in agriculture were introduced (Argentina), the Single System for the Recording of Child Labour was created (Ecuador), and a module on child labour statistics was implemented (Brazil).

2.15. Policies to prevent and combat discrimination at work

119. Labour market inclusion laws were adopted and plans on the inclusion of persons with disabilities were implemented (Brazil and Chile), while a training programme for personal assistants of persons with disabilities was launched (Dominican Republic).
120. The region has the greatest concentration of ratifications of the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169). The inclusion of women of African descent was promoted (Brazil), a strategy for the inclusion of ethnic peoples was adopted (Colombia), and indigenous young persons' economic inclusion (Plurinational State of Bolivia) and citizen participation (Ecuador) were promoted. The inclusion of LGBTQI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex plus) persons was also promoted (Brazil and Colombia).
121. With regard to HIV prevention in the working environment, tripartite training policies were promoted in the textile sector (Haiti), and a community prevention programme and training aimed at rural midwives were implemented (Guatemala).

2.16. Policies to promote gender equality

122. With regard to the **care economy**, inter-ministerial round tables on care were established (Argentina), national care policies were introduced (Brazil, Colombia and Costa Rica), campaigns on shared responsibility for care were launched (Peru), care cooperatives were created (Plurinational State of Bolivia and Colombia) and information platforms were set up (Chile). The Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), was ratified (Colombia and Costa Rica), as was the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), (El Salvador).
123. Additionally, the Cartagena Road Map: Investing in Care to Make Domestic Work Decent Work was adopted, and a network on vocational training and labour skills certification for the care sector was established under the coordination of ILO-CINTERFOR.
124. With regard to **wage equality and non-discrimination**, studies on measuring and eliminating the wage gap were undertaken (Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica and Panama), and progress was made in protection for women domestic workers by means of access to social security (Mexico) and in combating discrimination against pregnant and breastfeeding workers (Peru).
125. During the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, priority was given to inclusion measures (the ready-made garment sector in Brazil) and programmes for women's reintegration into the labour market (Costa Rica). The gender perspective was included in an employment recovery strategy (Coahuila State in Mexico).

126. Eight countries ratified the **Violence and Harassment** Convention, 2019 (No. 190). Guides and tools on harassment in the care sector were published (Mexico and Argentina), training was given to labour inspectors (Colombia and Peru), partnerships were strengthened in the area of equality in the business sector (Uruguay), and resources were created for the promotion of gender equality and the development of violence and harassment policies in businesses (Honduras).

2.17. Labour migration policies

127. There was progress in the strengthening of **labour migration policies** (Costa Rica and Guatemala), guides on hiring for refugees were updated (Costa Rica), plans to improve employment services were adopted (Guatemala and Mexico), as were laws on services for migrants (Mexico), and regulations on employment agencies were updated (Mexico).
128. Progress was made in the **protection of migrants' rights and their access to employment** by allowing temporary work permits to be used to seek work through the employment exchange (Peru), and capacity-building was offered to the Ministry of Labour (Colombia). Measures were adopted to certify skills and close gaps in migrants' access to employment (Colombia), local ordinances on human mobility were issued (Ecuador), and guidance programmes and legal advice services were introduced along migration corridors (Guatemala).
129. Several countries launched **information, awareness-raising and institutional strengthening campaigns** targeting, for example, graduates, networks and inter-union committees (Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica and Dominican Republic).
130. Lastly, the ILO Regional Strategy on Labour Migration and Human Mobility in Latin America and the Caribbean 2023–30 was rolled out, and a regional mechanism for the mutual recognition of labour skills certification between countries (2025) was launched.