



## ► 20th American Regional Meeting

1-3 October 2025, Punta Cana

## ► Report of the meeting

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## Introduction

1. The 20th American Regional Meeting of the International Labour Organization (ILO) was held in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, from 1 to 3 October 2025.<sup>1</sup>
2. This report contains a summary of the four thematic sittings held during the meeting, the presentation of the report of the Credentials Committee and the adoption of the Punta Cana Declaration.
3. The transcript and video recordings of all speeches made at the opening and closing sittings and during the discussion of the Report of the Director-General are available on the website of the meeting.<sup>2</sup>

## Elections and appointments

### Officers of the meeting

|                           |                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Chairperson:</b>       | Mr E. Olivares Ortega, Minister of Labour of the Dominican Republic                                         |
| <b>Vice-Chairpersons:</b> | Mr C. Jordan, Minister of Labour, Social Security and Third Sector of Barbados                              |
|                           | Ms L. Peña Izquierdo, President of the Employers' Confederation of the Dominican Republic (COPARDOM)        |
|                           | Mr G. del Río Doñé, President of the Autonomous Confederation of Workers' Unions (CASC), Dominican Republic |

### Officers of the groups

- **Chairperson of the Government group:** Mr J. A. Ríos Badillo, Secretariat of Labour and Social Welfare, Mexico
- **Chairperson and spokesperson of the Employers' group:** Mr G. Ricci, Guatemala
  - **Secretary:** Mr R. Suárez Santos, International Organisation of Employers
- **Chairperson and spokesperson of the Workers' group:** Ms M. Pujadas, Argentina
  - **Secretary:** Mr M. Di Stefano, Trade Union Confederation of the Americas

### Credentials Committee

- **Government representative:** Ms C. Almada Argüello, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, Paraguay
- **Employer representative:** Mr G. Solorzano Díaz, Honduran National Business Council, Honduras
- **Worker representative:** Mr M. Domínguez Almendares, Honduras

<sup>1</sup> Following the discussions initiated in 2022 with a view to reviewing the functioning of regional meetings, the Governing Body of the ILO adopted, at its 350th Session (March 2024), new arrangements for ILO regional meetings to be trialled over a four-year period (2025–28). The 20th American Regional Meeting was the first to be held under these new arrangements. See [GB.350/INS/7](#) and [GB.350/PV](#), para. 256.

<sup>2</sup> [Transcript of the speeches delivered during the 20th American Regional Meeting.](#)

### Drafting group appointed to prepare the conclusions

|                             |                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Government representatives: | Bahamas, Canada, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Uruguay                                        |
| Employer representatives:   | Mr G. Ricci<br>Ms S. Meyers-Granville<br>Mr J. Arroyo<br>Mr W. Matías Ramírez<br>Mr P. Dragún    |
| Worker representatives:     | Ms M. Pujadas<br>Ms K. Reece Bernal<br>Mr M. Di Stefano<br>Mr E. Gottwald<br>Mr J. E. Oñate Vera |

### Thematic sitting 1: Job creation, social protection and sustainable development

4. The moderator, Mr V. Pinheiro, Director of the ILO Country Office for Brazil and former Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, introduced the panellists: Ms L. Peña Izquierdo, Employers' Confederation of the Dominican Republic (COPARDOM), Dominican Republic; Ms F. Sequeira, Confederation of Workers Rerum Novarum (CTRN), Costa Rica; Mr A. Sanguino, Minister of Labour, Colombia; Mr D. Maurate Romero, Minister of Labour and Employment Promotion, Peru; Ms A. Gallardo, Honduran National Business Council (COHEP), Honduras; and Mr E. Oñate Vera, National Union of Workers (UNT), Mexico.
5. During the sitting, the following speakers took the floor from the audience: Mr O. Estefan Fuentes, Secretariat of Labour and Social Welfare, Mexico; Ms B. Tola Bermeo, International Domestic Workers Federation, Ecuador; Mr S. Hurtado, Confederation of Production and Commerce, Chile; Mr C. Segovia Villasanti, Deputy Minister of Labour, Paraguay; Ms D. Gómez Cely, Confederation of Workers of Colombia, Colombia; and Ms A. Banegas, Honduran National Business Council, Honduras.
6. The sitting opened with a brief presentation by Mr G. Martínez, ILO Regional Specialist in Labour Economics for Latin America and the Caribbean.

### Job creation

7. The panellists addressed the structural challenges the region was facing in moving towards a development model that generated quality employment. It was emphasized that despite advances in social policies, such as educational coverage, and periods of economic growth, labour markets were still characterized by high levels of informality, low wages, insufficient productivity and working conditions that were becoming persistently more precarious.
8. The panellists agreed that limited social protection coverage and persistent occupational safety and health risks reinforced those structural weaknesses. Governments' capacity to address those challenges was often insufficient and, in some cases, there was a lack of political will and limited institutional capacity to manage problems and transformations in the labour market. In that context, the absence of effective tripartite social dialogue was an additional obstacle: although formal consultation mechanisms existed, they often merely met requirements without genuinely influencing public policy, or they ended up focusing exclusively on sectors in the formal economy, thus excluding many workers.
9. Some panellists warned that that situation created a gap between the commitments made under the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 8 on decent work and economic

growth, and the way in which those commitments were implemented in practice due to a lack of systemic coherence. Therefore, participants highlighted the importance of designing integrated public policy frameworks to coordinate the various initiatives under way for enhanced coherence.

10. Among those proposals, emphasis was placed on moving towards policies to promote lifelong learning, upskilling and the transition to living wages with a focus on gender. It was also stressed that the processes must be anchored in the principles of social justice and sustainable development so that employment was not only a means of subsistence, but also a fundamental pillar of collective well-being and social cohesion.

## Transition to the formal economy

11. The panel addressed in greater detail the problem of informal employment, one of the main challenges in the region. In several countries, levels of informality had remained virtually stagnant in recent years, raising questions about the effectiveness of the policies implemented. One critical factor was the lack of a long-term vision and coordinated strategies among the production, education and social sectors, which highlighted the need to strengthen intersectoral coordination mechanisms.
12. Informality did not affect the entire working population in the same way. Women and young people faced additional barriers to accessing formal jobs, which reinforced preexisting inequalities and limited their social mobility. Although some countries had experienced a significant reduction in poverty in previous periods, structural gaps persisted due to the mismatch between the skills supplied by the education system and those demanded by the labour market, and also due to low productivity of human capital and insufficient competitiveness in various sectors of the economy.
13. In certain national contexts, millions of workers continued to work in informal conditions. That situation not only limited their access to social protection, but also prevented them from participating fully in the formal economy and in collective bargaining processes, due, among other factors, to low levels of membership in trade unions and business organizations. In response to that situation, it was proposed to strengthen administrative records and labour information systems so that the characteristics of the working population could be identified more accurately, including their level of education, access to social programmes, and mobility and migration dynamics. Policy responses that were highlighted included training and skills certification, the creation of multisectoral and multilevel coordination mechanisms with the participation of local governments, and the incorporation of digital tools, such as integrated spreadsheets or labour information systems, into management processes to guide young people towards sectors and careers with greater employment prospects and better pay.
14. In this section, audience members complemented the discussion by noting the importance of coordinating those measures with productive development policies for territories and with specific incentives for small and medium-sized enterprises, which were a key segment of the economic structure of the region. It was also emphasized that formalization should not be considered solely as a regulatory objective, but also as a means of safeguarding basic labour rights and promoting more stable and secure career paths.

## Digitalization and its impact

15. The panellists analysed the effects of digitalization, and artificial intelligence (AI) in particular, on the world of work. Technological innovation was rapidly transforming labour markets, and although the changes offered great opportunities, they also entailed risks that must be addressed through public policies.

16. While digital technologies could help to improve productivity, reduce exposure to hazardous work and open up new areas of employment, their benefits tended to be concentrated in large enterprises and privileged segments of the workforce. It was noted that this technological concentration risked widening existing gaps between workers in different sectors, between large and small enterprises, and even between countries.
17. Specific examples were given of how automation and AI were already affecting jobs in different sectors of production, including the case of international enterprises that had significantly reduced their workforce as a result of adopting new technologies. However, it was also emphasized that, if properly managed, AI could become a tool for improving working conditions, increasing productivity and reducing the workload in high-risk occupations.
18. Several panellists highlighted the need for appropriate regulatory frameworks to address the challenges of digitalization. That would involve ensuring transparency in the use of algorithms, recognizing labour relations in the context of digital platforms and strengthening collective bargaining as a means of counterbalancing the power of large technology corporations. Participants also noted the importance of including emerging forms of organizing work, such as remote working, in national laws and regulations in order to ensure respect for workers' rights regardless of their working arrangements.
19. The panellists agreed that the discussion on the future of digitalization and AI must be built into a process of tripartite social dialogue, accompanied by programmes for the reskilling and upskilling of both workers and managers. Those measures would be essential to ensure that digitalization did not lead to exclusion, but rather to shared opportunities for social and economic progress.
20. Some audience members supported that approach, insisting on the need for the region not to lag behind in the face of global technological advances. Participants highlighted the importance of the ILO, in coordination with governments, playing an active role in the debate on the regulation of AI and digital platforms to provide inputs to the international discussion that would continue at the 114th Session (2026) of the International Labour Conference with a view to the possible adoption of a Convention and a Recommendation on the subject.

### Supply chains and sustainable enterprises

21. The panellists shared experiences and reflected on the role of supply chains in formalization processes and business sustainability. It was highlighted that in various sectors, such as agricultural production, informality still predominated, particularly among small-scale producers who faced difficulties in accessing finance, technical assistance and wider markets.
22. However, participants also provided positive examples, in which cooperation among producers had enabled them to integrate more effectively into national and international value chains.
23. Informality was not only a structural problem, but also presented an opportunity for concrete action and innovation in public policies. The integration of small-scale producers into sustainable supply chains was identified as a strategy that, in addition to promoting formalization through productive inclusion, strengthened the resilience of local communities and improved the competitiveness of economic sectors.
24. Some audience members emphasized the importance of ensuring that those initiatives were accompanied by inclusive credit policies, tax incentives, and regulatory frameworks that promoted sustainable practices. It was also noted that business sustainability required both the formalization of work and an active commitment to compliance with environmental and social standards that reinforced the legitimacy of value chains.

## Social protection

25. The panellists stressed the importance of ensuring that social protection systems in the region were fair and sustainable. In particular, they highlighted the need to move towards universal coverage, while ensuring the systems' financial sustainability and responsiveness to changes in the world of work.
26. The region faced significant challenges in including self-employed workers and those linked to highly precarious sectors, such as domestic work, care services, recycling and digital platforms. In that regard, subsidized contributory schemes were highlighted as a key mechanism for facilitating inclusion. Reference was also made to the need to promote financial education as part of strategies to expand social protection coverage.
27. One of the key proposals was to strengthen the tripartite bodies responsible for decision-making in the area of social protection, in order to ensure that the various stakeholders could participate effectively in defining priorities and designing innovative governance models. It was also suggested that tax reforms should be pursued to encourage formalization and, at the same time, secure sufficient resources to finance universal protection systems.
28. The panellists agreed that the Monotributo contribution and tax scheme was a useful tool for reducing the costs of entering the formal economy and enabling small-scale entrepreneurs to access both social security benefits and more stable financing channels.
29. In their comments, audience members gave examples of current national policies, such as employment programmes that had adopted formalization as a State policy, and initiatives to extend social protection coverage to workers in emerging sectors. It was also emphasized that public spending on social protection in the region was significantly lower as a percentage of gross domestic product compared to international standards, which created a margin of vulnerability in relation to economic or public health crises.
30. The general consensus was that informality constituted a direct threat to social equality and the sustainability of protection systems. The panellists therefore called for a redesign of policies focused on shared responsibility, reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and promoting progressive tax systems that allowed coverage to be expanded without affecting business competitiveness. Particular emphasis was placed on the urgent need to include digital platform workers in social protection systems, thus ensuring that technological innovation did not lead to greater exclusion.

## Sustainable development

31. The panellists reflected on the need for labour and social reforms in the region to translate into concrete improvements in the daily lives of workers. They emphasized that structural transformations must be inclusive and sustainable, and that international commitments on labour rights and social justice only acquired legitimacy if they had a real impact on households.
32. Among the proposals put forward was the possibility of moving towards wage increases, accompanied by measures such as the progressive reduction of working hours and the restoration of benefits related to Sunday and night work. Those measures were not only mechanisms for social justice, but also tools for improving productivity by boosting the motivation and well-being of the workforce.
33. It was important to promote labour, pension and wage reforms with an intersectional approach incorporating gender, disability and rural perspectives. One proposal was the implementation of an automatic lifetime pension as a step towards universal coverage, guaranteeing everyone a minimum income in old age. Similarly, the need for specific sectoral

policies for occupations such as carers and delivery drivers, who were often excluded from traditional social security systems, was highlighted.

34. The responsibility for implementing those reforms should not fall exclusively on one ministry or a limited set of institutions, but required the coordination of the entire State apparatus. Coordinated, cross-cutting governance would be a prerequisite for the reforms to have a comprehensive and sustained impact.

### **Social dialogue for inclusive and sustainable development**

35. The panellists agreed that tripartite social dialogue was a fundamental pillar for promoting formal employment, strengthening social protection and building inclusive sustainable development. However, in many contexts, forums for dialogue were weak or biased towards certain sectors, which reduced their legitimacy and their capacity to influence public policy. In response, the importance of revitalizing dialogue mechanisms and increasing their institutionalization, transparency and effectiveness was emphasized.
36. An appropriate regulatory framework and intense social dialogue were essential in addressing emerging challenges, such as the regulation of work on digital platforms and the transition to the formal economy. Tripartite bodies could play a key role in building consensus and legitimizing the labour reforms needed in the region.
37. Some audience members shared institutional experiences in which economic and social councils had managed to survive independently of political cycles, which strengthened their ability to contribute to a long-term agenda. Priority areas for the immediate future were also identified, such as the creation of decent work, formalization, the sustainability of social security, the elimination of child labour and the strengthening of the functioning of social dialogue bodies.

### **Wage policies and transition to the formal economy**

38. The panellists emphasized that the appropriate setting of minimum wages was a tool not only for redistribution, but also for formalization and social cohesion. It was argued that without decent work, effective formalization, universal social protection and fair taxation, it was impossible to move towards a sustainable development model or adherence to the principles of social justice. In that regard, wage policies must be designed in a comprehensive manner, coordinated with strategies on productivity and support for business, especially micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

### **Youth employment, self-employment and microenterprises**

39. The panellists emphasized that, given the insufficient creation of formal jobs, many young people had to become self-employed or create a microenterprise. While this dynamic was a testament to creativity and innovation, it also highlighted a lack of structural opportunities and presented a risk that a large proportion of young people would remain trapped in informal work.
40. To address this challenge, the panellists recommended designing policies that promoted mechanisms to regulate and support young entrepreneurs, ensuring that their initiatives could be developed under decent formal conditions. Proposals included expanding access to seed capital, creating financing programmes tailored to the needs of microenterprises, and implementing training programmes that strengthened business skills and increased the survival rate of those units of production. Those approaches highlighted the need to strengthen public policies and instruments that promoted youth employability and entrepreneurship, accompanied by sustainability criteria and adapted to the reality of each country.

41. Some audience members reiterated these ideas, indicating that policies to support young people must be linked to territorial and sectoral development strategies so that they were not limited to isolated responses but contributed to a structural transformation of opportunities for new generations to enter the labour market.

### Domestic and care work

42. The panel acknowledged that domestic and care work was a sector with a high degree of persistent precarious working conditions. Demand for those services was growing rapidly due to demographic and social changes in the region, but the working conditions of the service providers had not improved to the same extent.
43. The panellists urged countries in the region to make progress in the ratification and implementation of the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), which established clear standards for the protection of domestic workers. They also stressed the need to formally recognize the economic and social value of care work, eliminate cultural stigmas and run awareness-raising campaigns that highlighted the sector's contribution to the collective well-being.
44. Strengthening care work required the creation of effective forums for tripartite social dialogue. That would make it possible to build fairer and more sustainable regulatory frameworks, ensuring that growing demand translated into concrete improvements in working conditions.

### Freedom of association

45. The discussion also addressed the subject of freedom of association as a pillar of sustainable development. The panellists emphasized that the right of workers to organize freely and to join the trade union of their choice was an essential element of balanced industrial relations.
46. The panellists called for the strengthening of institutional and legal guarantees to ensure an enabling environment for the exercise of freedom of association and for the strengthening of collective bargaining as a mechanism for peaceful dispute resolution.

### The ILO and multilateralism

47. In the final part of the sitting, the panel reflected on the role of the ILO and multilateralism in the current circumstances. International governance was faced with multiple tensions. Direct attacks on multilateralism jeopardized the ability of international organizations to fulfil their mandates.
48. The panellists agreed on the importance of defending the ILO's role as the world's leading organization on the world of work and of reaffirming tripartism as its greatest strength. Despite differences among stakeholders, tripartite social dialogue remained an essential tool for preserving the Organization's relevance and legitimacy.
49. Some audience members highlighted the importance of consolidating multilateral action in defence of decent work, recognizing that countries could not face the current challenges (including digitalization, informality and precariousness) in isolation. International cooperation and concerted action in multilateral forums would be indispensable in moving towards a more just and inclusive future of work.

## Thematic sitting 2: Strengthening democratic institutions, respect for fundamental rights and institutionalized social dialogue

50. The moderator, Ms S. Luna Camacho, Director of the ILO Country Office for Argentina, introduced the panellists: Mr C. Jordan, Minister of Labour, Social Security and Third Sector, Barbados; Mr P. Chacón, Deputy Minister of Labour, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare,

Chile; Mr W. Mac Master Rojas, National Employers Association of Colombia; Ms M. Jervis, National Federation of Chambers of Industries, Ecuador; Mr G. Martínez, General Confederation of Labour of the Argentine Republic; and Mr E. Gottwald, American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, United States of America.

51. During the sitting, the following speakers took the floor from the audience: Mr R. Castro, Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, El Salvador; Mr R. Patry, International Labour Affairs Program, Canada; Mr R. Borrás, Confederation of Workers of Argentina; and Ms V. Amorós Kohn, National Confederation of Private Business Associations, Peru.
52. The sitting began with a brief presentation by Ms M. Fino, ILO Specialist in International Labour Standards for the Andean Countries.
53. A number of topics were addressed, which are summarized below. The main ideas discussed centred on strengthening democratic institutions, respect for fundamental rights and the importance of institutionalized social dialogue in the world of work. Panellists and tripartite participants from various countries discussed the fundamental role of tripartite cooperation in promoting social justice, gender equality and effective labour policies. They highlighted best practices, existing challenges – such as high rates of informality and persistent gender gaps – and the need for broad and inclusive dialogue to support democracy and address social and economic inequalities. Lastly, the need for the conclusions of the debate to reach the International Labour Conference and the ILO Governing Body was emphasized.

### Function of the fundamental principles and rights at work

54. The panellists recalled that the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work reaffirmed the commitment of Member States to respect, promote and effectively realize freedom of association, collective bargaining, the elimination of child labour and forced labour, the elimination of discrimination and to guarantee safe and healthy working environments.
55. Tripartite social dialogue was closely linked to the promotion of the fundamental principles and rights at work. It was highlighted that national, regional and local social dialogue processes enabled better implementation of labour rights; one example was the development of dialogue processes in Chile prior to the adoption of the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187), and the pension reform.
56. Furthermore, trade union rights were enabling rights for other fundamental rights and a prerequisite for the development of all other labour rights. The need for trade union rights to be respected for the effective development of social dialogue was highlighted.
57. The important role of dialogue in achieving consensus within the framework of the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), was also mentioned. That had been the case in the determination of minimum wages; hence it was particularly important to institutionalize such dialogue where that had not yet happened.
58. Participants highlighted successful experiences in tripartite social dialogue at the transnational level in the development of trade policies. It was necessary to ensure respect for the fundamental principles and rights as necessary pillars for trade negotiations, such as those conducted by the United States through the tripartite committee that advises the Government on those matters (in particular, in relation to the prohibition on the purchase of products resulting from forced labour).

### Conditions for sustainable institutionalized tripartite social dialogue and the rule of law

59. Strengthening democratic institutions, ensuring respect for the rule of law and counteracting the deterioration of forums for social dialogue were essential in order to move towards more just and inclusive societies in the region. Institutionalized tripartite social dialogue was central

to building the necessary consensus to produce economic development policies with social justice.

60. In States governed by the rule of law, for the construction of legislation to succeed and be sustainable, it must be based on social dialogue. The need to overcome apprehensions about social dialogue was highlighted, as strong collective institutions achieved more progress than individual institutions. The institution must be built jointly.
61. Participants also highlighted the need to strengthen inclusive tripartite social dialogue at the local and regional levels so that it could serve as a basis for institutionalized social dialogue processes at the national level and lend them legitimacy. However, various significant constraints on the existence of sustainable institutionalized social dialogue were highlighted, such as limited effective participation due to high rates of informality, low unionization, political polarization and disinformation, and gender gaps.
62. The need to promote representation through more representative organizations was also highlighted as a key element. There must be trust among the different actors and each of them must be accountable. It was important that governments respect the independence of the social partners and that constituents work together to ensure that institutionalized social dialogue was a policy that was unaffected by changes in government.
63. All stakeholders must participate actively, positively and transparently in social dialogue. Commitment and political will were prerequisites, as was the existence of checks and balances to generate trust and transparency. It must be possible to address differences during dialogue without creating enmity. Tripartite social dialogue must be a continuous process in the interests of sustainable development.

### Strengthening democracy through sustainable institutionalized social dialogue

64. The existence of strong institutions based on transparency, independence and collective participation was a fundamental condition for resilient democracies. Social dialogue was a fundamental pillar of participatory democracy and provided a framework for it. Most countries in the region had structures of this type for reaching consensus, preventing disputes and responding to crises. The legitimacy and sustainability of labour reforms also depended on inclusive tripartite processes that respected international labour standards.
65. Participants noted that critical situations were those that tested societies, and that social dialogue promoted democracy. In that context, it played a fundamental role in bringing divergent positions closer together in the search for consensus-based solutions and the prevention of disputes, particularly in times of economic, political and public health crises. The panellists recalled some agreements concluded at key moments in a country's development, as had been the case in Argentina, Barbados, Colombia and Ecuador, where tripartite social dialogue had helped the country to move forward during the COVID-19 pandemic.
66. However, a decline in forums for institutionalized social dialogue in the region was noted. It was therefore necessary to recognize the importance of social dialogue for democratic coexistence. Institutionalized social dialogue should not be discretionary or dependent on the governments in power. Furthermore, institutionalized social dialogue should be used to reimagine the social contract through a consensus-based process.
67. There was also a direct link between institutionalized social dialogue and the Sustainable Development Goals. Tripartite social dialogue brought together the different parties and combated dogma, which was particularly important in the area of sustainable development. In that regard, it was important to have inclusive spaces for social dialogue, equipped with tools so that all social partners had the same capacities and equal conditions to participate in the dialogue processes.

## Gender mainstreaming

68. Participants highlighted that gender inequality and barriers to inclusion – such as lower participation of women, wage gaps, greater representation of women in informal work, and unequal care responsibilities – were persistent challenges in the region. It was essential to incorporate gender equality as a cross-cutting theme in all policy debates. Inclusive social dialogue was a key tool for overcoming structural barriers.
69. Moreover, it was also necessary to strengthen the capacities of tripartite constituents to participate in social dialogue and promote the fundamental principles and rights at work.
70. Cultural transformations and socio-economic gaps were also significant challenges and, in addition to introducing regulatory changes to ensure women's participation in social dialogue forums and leadership positions, it was necessary to develop public policies that promoted material equality. It was noted that the rate of women's participation in the world of work varied considerably between urban and rural areas. In that regard, tripartite forums were important for combating bias and advocating for universal participation and coverage.

## Thematic sitting 3: Just transition towards resilient societies

71. The moderator, Mr J. Musabayana, Director of the ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office for the Caribbean Countries, introduced the panellists: Mr L. Marinho, Minister of Labour and Employment, Brazil; Mr O. Estefan Fuentes, Secretariat of Labour and Social Welfare, Mexico; Ms S. Mayers-Granville, Barbados Employers' Confederation; Mr L. García, Chamber of Industries of Uruguay; Mr A. Lisboa, International Trade Union Confederation; and Ms L. Chang, Canadian Labour Congress.
72. During the sitting, the following speakers took the floor from the audience: Mr R. Clarke, Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Third Sector, Barbados; Mr G. Bustos, Confederation of Production and Commerce, Chile; Ms J. Gómez, Costa Rican Union of Chambers and Associations of the Private Business Sector, Costa Rica; Mr A. Rodríguez, National Union of Workers, Mexico; and Ms N. Quevedo, Public Services International.
73. The session began with a brief presentation by Mr A. Pino, ILO Country Coordinator for Haiti and Chief Technical Adviser on the Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office for Central America.
74. The presentation highlighted that a just transition was key to addressing the three major current transformations – environmental, digital and demographic transformations – in an inclusive manner, ensuring that workers, businesses and communities were not left behind. It outlined the challenges facing the world of work in the face of the climate crisis, such as the loss of ecosystem-related jobs, occupational safety and health risks, displacements and technological gaps, but also the opportunities to generate millions of green jobs, strengthen social protection and leverage collective bargaining and social dialogue. Lastly, it highlighted the role of governments, employers and workers in promoting coherent policies, sustainable business models and the protection of rights, with the ILO as a facilitator of policy frameworks and tripartite dialogue that enable progress towards more resilient, sustainable and fair societies.

## The environmental transition and its impact on the world of work

75. The panellists agreed that the effects of the climate crisis, environmental degradation and the transition to sustainability were already evident in the world of work. Both job creation and job losses had been observed, as well as productivity losses as a result of environmental damage, climate events and pollution. There were opportunities for the transition to generate more and better jobs and greater competitiveness. However, that would only happen to the extent that

related policies, coordination and financing facilitated it. The transition could happen, but it would only be just if it was targeted, inclusive and based on social dialogue. The panel highlighted the clear urgency of the situation, particularly for small island developing States.

### **Link between environmental policies and the world of work**

76. Policies and commitments aimed at environmental sustainability (such as the nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement) must be linked to the world of work. Many of those commitments and policies did not include provisions to protect workers, support businesses and link environmental objectives with corresponding social protection, employment, training, and occupational safety and health policies. That did not encourage ownership of those commitments and policies by the social partners, which prevented them from contributing to them, and did not promote a balance between economic viability and the achievement of social and environmental objectives. Although it was governments that made the commitments, without public support the responsibility and burden of financing and implementation fell largely on the social partners. The participation of workers' and employers' representatives in genuine social dialogue would ensure that action plans for environmental sustainability were predictable and gradual, offering a clear business case for employers and also protections for workers.

### **Importance of financing for policy adoption and reorganization of production**

77. Lack of financing was identified as one of the main challenges. Both countries and companies in the region faced difficulties in accessing resources to enable the implementation of sustainable investments and carry out the necessary reorganization of production. In particular, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises – the main creators of employment in the region – faced high costs in adopting clean technologies, and required agile mechanisms for green credit, tax incentives and technical support. The panel proposed mass promotion of financing instruments such as credit-for-nature swaps, green bonds, payments for ecosystem services, and subsidies or tax credits for investments that enabled progress to be made in environmental sustainability.

### **Erosion of occupational safety and health as a result of the climate crisis**

78. The panel emphasized that occupational safety and health had been a fundamental right since 2022. If the necessary measures were not taken, the climate crisis was threatening to erode that right in various ways, including the increased prevalence of heat stress due to rising temperatures. The risk was particularly high among workers in the agricultural, construction and fishing sectors. Some countries affected were taking the risk very seriously and were conducting studies, regulating, implementing training programmes and developing applications to identify the risk and address it without jeopardizing the health and safety of workers. Lastly, it was recalled that occupational safety and health risks were not limited to heat stress, but were also associated with other climate events; combating them should be a priority in new occupations and jobs arising from the transition to environmental sustainability.

### **Importance of vocational training and labour market policies in the climate transition**

79. Vocational training, reskilling and active labour market policies were identified as key tools for anticipating changes, attracting investment and facilitating career paths for those affected. Training should include awareness-raising, which would enable the various actors in the world of work to take collective responsibility for taking measures to promote sustainability. Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, in particular, required financial, technological and skills development support to be able to adapt without losing competitiveness.

## **Inclusion of groups particularly exposed to environmental risks and green economy projects: Conditions for a just transition**

80. The panellists mentioned migrants, women, workers in the informal economy and indigenous peoples as being particularly exposed to the impacts of climate change and the transition. Some of them were also exposed to forced displacement as a result of climate change and large-scale projects to advance the green economy (such as displacement caused by large mining projects). The active participation of these groups in the design of policies and projects was essential to ensure equality and social justice. Therefore, some countries had developed specific agreements and projects to promote decent work in sectors with a high concentration of these groups (namely, coffee-growing, wine-making, agriculture and civil works).

## **Social protection as a pillar of the just transition for households affected by environmental disasters and the impacts of the transition**

81. Social protection was essential both to support workers displaced by the transition and to strengthen resilience to environmental disasters. Ensuring universal and sustainable systems would promote an inclusive transition.

## **Social partners, social dialogue and the ILO**

82. In that context, employers' and workers' organizations could provide technical support to their members and offer them a forum for sharing information and good practices in the field of sustainability. The panel also highlighted the experience of bipartite work between employers' and workers' representatives on issues of common interest, and recalled that a just transition could also be an area for joint work.
83. Social dialogue and bargaining were a sine qua non for the realization of a just transition. Social dialogue was a key element in promoting the policies and coordination measures required to achieve a just transition, as it encouraged the conclusion of agreements that balanced global sustainability needs with the local needs of the social partners.
84. The ILO's unique position of having tripartite legitimacy and the technical capacity to support countries, strengthen policy coordination and promote standards that guaranteed decent work, social inclusion and sustainability was highlighted. The ILO was uniquely placed to create regional initiatives for exchanges to promote the greening of industries, productivity and formalization.

## **Thematic sitting 4: Strategies for designing public policies for the improvement of skills and for vocational training**

85. The moderator, Mr Italo Cardona, Director of the ILO Office for the Andean Countries introduced the panellists: Ms P. Glover-Rolle, Minister of Labour and the Public Service, Bahamas; Mr R. Santos Badia, National Institute of Technical and Vocational Training, Dominican Republic; Mr A. Palacios Torres, National Employers Association of Colombia; Mr J. L. Araya Chaves, Costa Rican Union of Chambers and Associations of the Private Business Sector; Ms L. M. León Molina, Independent Trade Union Alliance Confederation of Workers, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; and Mr C. Pereira da Silva, Trade Union Confederation of the Americas.
86. During the sitting, the following speakers took the floor from the audience: Mr N. Ratto, Minister of Labour, Chile; Mr S. Sánchez, National Confederation of Dominican Workers, Dominican Republic; Ms N. Lidijover, Confederation of Production and Commerce, Chile; Mr A. Rodríguez, Minister of Labour and Social Security, Costa Rica; Mr M. Ferreira, Força

Sindical, Brazil; and Ms J. Capron, Chamber of Commerce and Employers' Confederation, Bahamas.

87. The sitting began with a brief presentation by Ms E. Montobbio, Director of the Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training (ILO-CINTERFOR).

### **Value of technical and vocational education and training**

88. The panel emphasized that technical and vocational education and training (TVET) should be viewed as a right and as a strategic tool for productive and social development. It should also be integrated into national development policies, linking supply in education to demand in the labour market. TVET not only promoted employability, but also productivity, innovation and social cohesion. Reference was made to the joint efforts of the Inter-American Centre for the Development of Knowledge in Vocational Training (ILO-CINTERFOR) and the member institutions of its network to raise the social status of TVET.
89. In addition, national and regional qualifications frameworks should be promoted in which training was positioned as prestigious and of good quality, comparable to other levels of education. Vocational training policies must be part of national development strategies and be integrated with policies on education, productive development, employment and other public services. The objective was for TVET to guarantee equitable access to services and for supply to be aligned with labour market needs, with particular emphasis on people in situations of vulnerability.

### **Social dialogue on vocational training among governments, enterprises and trade unions**

90. The panel agreed that the quality, relevance, equality and sustainability of vocational training depended on governments, employers and workers taking concerted action. Tripartism was the basis of legitimacy for public policies on training, and social dialogue enabled vocational training institutions to anticipate demand, adapt their supply and promote inclusion. The social partners must be involved not only in the design but also in the monitoring and evaluation of policies. Furthermore, social dialogue should be institutionalized not only in the governance of vocational training systems and institutions but also in bodies such as labour market observatories, so that decisions were collective, had legitimacy and political support, and were based on empirical data.
91. The panel highlighted the role that the tripartite constituents must play to ensure the sustainability of vocational training services, both concerning financing based on the public budget and employers' contributions, and in helping to ensure the quality, relevance and practicality of training, as well as matching training supply with the specific and detailed needs of the productive environment and the labour market. The tripartite constituents could also ensure that the labour rights of graduates were respected when they entered the labour market.

### **Equality and inclusion in training**

92. The panel emphasized that inclusion was key to ensuring economic stability and social cohesion. Training systems must incorporate affirmative action for women, young people and vulnerable populations, with a focus on gender and intersectionality. That meant not only ensuring that they had equal access but also that they remained in training and were successful, which required the adoption of measures to support them, namely: scholarships, care systems, transportation and curriculum adaptation. In addition, it was recommended that training should be linked to broader social policies (social protection, youth employment, inclusion of persons with disabilities) so that it became a genuine policy of equality.

93. The inclusion of young people was particularly important, given the challenges they faced in entering the labour market. In light of those challenges, the panel referred to the recommendations made in the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, including the development of effective policies aimed at creating full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work opportunities for all, and in particular facilitating the transition from education and training to work, with an emphasis on the effective integration of young people into the world of work. In that regard, the panel stressed the need to integrate the use of digital technologies into TVET, which was vital for building a better future of work.

### Dual training, quality apprenticeships and lifelong learning

94. The panel highlighted the need for continuous learning that included smooth transitions between initial training, on-the-job training and ongoing training. Both dual training and quality apprenticeships could facilitate the transition from school to formal employment, provided that they were properly regulated and guaranteed fair working and training conditions for apprentices. Such experiences should be linked to qualifications frameworks and skills certification systems, as that would promote the recognition of apprenticeships and their use in later stages of working life. The ILO Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208), was mentioned as a valuable tool for guiding countries in the region in reforming regulatory frameworks for apprenticeships and strengthening dual training systems.

### Migration and skills certification and recognition

95. The panel noted the significant increase in migration in the Americas region in recent years and highlighted its main characteristics (namely, a high percentage of migration within the region itself, labour migrants of working age, migration as a family phenomenon, and the high percentage of women migrants). Speakers also highlighted the opportunity to make better use of the labour skills of the migrant population if more strategic coordination among vocational training institutions was achieved, which could complement labour migration policies.
96. Regional labour mobility required transparent mechanisms for the validation and recognition of skills. Certification systems must recognize both formal learning and learning acquired through work experience. That made it easier for migrants and cross-border workers to re-enter the labour market, thereby reducing informality. In addition, the panel recommended moving towards regional qualifications frameworks that provided for greater portability of diplomas and certificates, thus contributing to safe and orderly labour migration, with benefits for both workers and receiving countries.
97. The panel also reiterated that strategies must be promoted to facilitate access to vocational training and the recognition of skills, both for migrants and for the diaspora living in third countries, to help improve their integration into the labour market. In that regard, coordination of educational subsystems to move towards training that was more competitive, dual training and the use of virtual training were resources that could be exploited to a greater extent.
98. The panel referred to the Skills Passport, an initiative promoted by the ILO to enable certifications of skills issued in one country to be recognized by other countries in the region. Fourteen countries in the region had already committed to the initiative, which aimed to facilitate access to formal employment for people in situations of mobility, improve the efficiency of labour markets, promote social cohesion from a social justice perspective, strengthen countries' institutional frameworks, and jointly address mismatches between skills and unmet labour demand in key sectors of production.

## Technological transformation and the digital divide

99. There was a risk of exclusion in a context of accelerated digitalization. Therefore, vocational training must include basic, intermediate and advanced digital skills to ensure that no group was left behind. In addition, AI and other emerging technologies must be approached from a critical perspective that considered their impact on the organization of work and labour relations. Training should incorporate innovative methodologies, the use of digital platforms, simulators, virtual resources and blended learning methods, so that institutions could adapt to flexible, inclusive and resilient learning in the face of crises, such as the experience during the pandemic.

## TVET and decent work

100. In that regard, the panel highlighted that TVET was an instrument of unquestionable relevance as an engine of development, a facilitator of formalization, and an advocate for better conditions of access to formal jobs and the guarantee of labour rights. It was in line with the ILO's broad concept of decent work (namely, the opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for all, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives, and equality of opportunity and treatment for all).

## Financing and sustainability

101. The panellists recalled that vocational training required stable and sufficient resources. Speakers emphasized that sustainable systems tended to combine public funding, contributions from enterprises and, in some cases, mixed public-private schemes. In addition, it was recommended that funding should be linked to clear objectives of coverage, quality and inclusion, and that accountability mechanisms should be established to ensure transparency and efficiency in the use of funds.

## Presentation of the report of the Credentials Committee

102. **The Chairperson of the Credentials Committee** presented the report of the committee during the last plenary sitting of the meeting. She drew the meeting's attention to two issues. The first was the obligation of all Members invited as full participants to accredit tripartite delegations. Unfortunately, two delegations were not tripartite and twelve Member States had not accredited any delegation. The Committee urged governments to accredit tripartite delegations in a transparent manner at future ILO meetings, in consultation with the most representative employers' and workers' organizations. Second, she urged constituents to continue their efforts to achieve gender parity: women accounted for 37.4 per cent of the delegates and technical advisers accredited to the meeting, which represented minimal progress compared to the last American Regional Meeting, held in Panama in 2018.
103. The Committee considered one objection, two complaints and one communication. It was particularly important that the parties in those cases provide complete and clear information on the facts so that the Committee could function properly, especially if the duration of meetings was reduced. Due to the lack of clear information provided to the Committee, it had been unable to reach definitive conclusions on the objection. The Chairperson of the Committee also recalled the importance of governments fulfilling their obligations to cover the expenses of tripartite delegations (even in times of financial crisis), as well as ensuring that the social partners could submit their objections, complaints or communications without fear of reprisals. The full report of the Credentials Committee is available on the website of the meeting.

## Adoption of the Punta Cana Declaration

- 104. The Chairperson** informed delegates that the conclusions of the Regional Meeting, published on the meeting website and in the ILO Events app under document reference AMRM.20/D.2, were the result of extensive negotiations and the tripartite agreement among the members of the drafting group.
- 105. A Government delegate from Uruguay**, speaking on behalf of the drafting group, said that the group had reached a tripartite agreement to add the following sentence at the end of the first paragraph of the draft Punta Cana Declaration: “We express our gratitude to the Government of the Dominican Republic for its valuable contribution as the host country of this meeting, whose impeccable organization and warm hospitality have been crucial to the success of the tripartite social dialogue.”
- 106. The Chairperson** noted that there were no objections to the proposed amendment.
- The meeting unanimously adopted the Punta Cana Declaration for democracy, peace, decent work and social dialogue: Uniting the Americas for a future with sustainable development and social justice.*<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In a *Note verbale* dated 18 November 2025, the Government of Argentina requested the Office to put on the record that it dissociated itself from the following paragraphs and expressions in the Declaration, which did not adequately reflect its country's position:

- paragraph 2: “social justice” and “persistent structural inequalities”;
- paragraph 4: “social justice”;
- paragraph 5: “ILO’s Strategic Plan for 2026–29”, “social justice” “ILO Centenary Declaration” and “Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work”;
- paragraph 12: “green jobs”;
- paragraph 21(e): “gender equality”;
- paragraph 22(b): “Global Coalition for Social Justice”.