

► IRDS Briefing Note

March 2026

REGIONAL TRIPARTITE SOCIAL DIALOGUE: The Road to the Punta Cana Declaration ¹

On October 3, 2025, the Punta Cana Declaration for Democracy, Peace, Decent Work, and Social Dialogue: Uniting the Americas for a Future of Sustainable Development and Social Justice was adopted during the 20th American Regional Meeting.² This declaration establishes clear priorities for the ILO and its constituents in the Americas in line with its Strategic Plan for 2026–2029, with the aim of promoting decent work, inclusive and sustainable growth, reducing informality, closing structural gaps, and ensuring social justice for all people in the region. Inspired by the 2019 ILO Centenary Declaration on the Future of Work and the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), as amended in 2022, the ILO's tripartite constituents affirm that only through democracy, cooperation, and solidarity can we move toward a more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient future of work in the Americas.

OBJECTIVE

The adoption of the declaration during the 20th American Regional Meeting would not have been possible without the preparatory work carried out by the social partners in the region. This briefing note aims to highlight the main aspects of that preparatory work, considering the process as a best practice in tripartite social dialogue at the regional level in the Americas.

This work was carried out through monthly meetings beginning in December 2024, held both online and in person in March and August 2025, as well as during the days of the Meeting with the tripartite stakeholders. The first item determined, along with the meeting agenda, was

the Terms of Reference for the Preparatory Steering Committee. These were adopted in December 2024 and laid the foundation for the working methodology. The contributions of the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (CSA) and the International Organization of Employers (IOE) were key to the success of this part of the process.

Tripartite Steering Committee

The Tripartite Steering Committee was composed of 5 representatives from governments, 5 from workers' organizations, and 5 from employers' organizations. The representatives from the workers' and employers' groups

¹ This document is the result of collaboration between the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV), the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP), and the ILO Regional Initiative for Strengthening Social Dialogue and Collective Labor Relations in Latin America and the Caribbean (IRDS).

² [Punta Cana Declaration for democracy, peace, decent work and social dialogue: Uniting the Americas for a future with sustainable development and social justice](#)

were appointed by the CSA and the IOE, respectively, with the aim of ensuring broad geographic representation across the region and a good gender balance.

As for the government representatives, it was requested that one representative be appointed from each of the subregions of North America, the Caribbean, the Andean Countries, Central America, and the Southern Cone of Latin America.

The ILO Office was responsible for facilitating the process of setting the agenda and drafting the conclusions of each meeting of the Tripartite Steering Committee.

Basis for the work

It was considered that the ILO Regional Meetings are key instruments for the tripartite constituents to guide the work program of the ILO Office in the region, while also enabling the constituents to identify trends and priorities in the world of work and design strategies to address challenges and optimize opportunities, in accordance with the region's specific situation and priorities, and in coordination with the global processes underway within the organization.

It should also be noted that the new model adopted for these Regional Meetings reduced their duration to three days, making preparatory work absolutely essential. With the aim of ensuring that ILO constituents in Latin America take ownership of the ILO's future work, the process sought to be participatory in all its aspects, but particularly in setting the meeting's agenda. This made for a productive event that truly laid out the roadmap for the ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean for the next five years. It also ensured ownership of the conclusions and follow-up on the priorities identified in the Punta Cana Declaration.

Steering Committee Tasks

1. Establish the 3-day agenda for the Meeting. This included agreeing on the topics to be addressed in each of the panels, the speakers, the methodology, etc.
2. Ensure the existence of a negotiated draft of conclusions to be presented and adopted during the October Meeting.
3. Decisions should contemplate cost considerations and the limited resources available.

Process Followed by the Committee

1. Each stakeholder group appointed five representatives who committed to participating throughout the process. From the start of the process, each representative could designate an alternate to replace them if, due to exceptional circumstances and/or force majeure, they were unable to attend any of the regular meetings. However, the members of the Preparatory Steering Committee recognized that continuity would be essential to achieving optimal results.
2. Each stakeholder group appointed a spokesperson. The spokesperson was responsible for coordinating the group's position prior to each monthly preparatory meeting. Additionally, the spokesperson served as the point of contact for the secretariat should it need to communicate with the group between preparatory meetings.
3. The ILO Office facilitated the process with strong leadership from the Regional Directorate (this was a key factor). A full monthly schedule was adopted in advance. All meetings would have an agenda, with key questions distributed one week before the sessions and minutes taken of the conclusions.
4. The Dominican Republic, as the host country, was one of the five government representatives and co-chaired the sessions with the ILO.
5. The meetings were structured and conducted with a focus on decision-making. It was agreed that all decisions would be made by consensus. When consensus did not emerge spontaneously, the role of the co-chairs was to encourage and facilitate dialogue among the groups, relying on the three spokespersons to help reach an agreement.

Results of the Committee's Work

As a result of the Committee's work, a series of decisions and documents were adopted that contributed to the successful conduct of the Meeting and are described below.

Draft document to guide the discussion on the organization of the agenda for the 20th American Regional Meeting.

This document was prepared with the aim of providing a starting point for organizing the agenda of the 20th American Regional Meeting and the thematic panels. Given

the limited duration of the Meeting (3 days) and the need to include time for the opening and closing sessions and the plenary sessions, it was determined that four panels would be the maximum possible.

Initial discussions with the tripartite constituents had already identified key issues for each group, with consensus on the need for an approach grounded in labour rights, social dialogue, and democracy, among other priorities.

The Steering Committee established the Meeting agenda, consisting of four thematic panels that would help draft robust conclusions to guide priority actions in the region over the next five years. This is in line with the goal of achieving an inclusive and sustainable world of work, where strong democratic institutions and effective social dialogue are the pathways to a more just and equitable future of work. To this end, it is essential to uphold multilateralism as a key tool for social justice and lasting peace.

The constituents renewed their commitment to multilateralism, the strengthening of the international labour standards system, and the design of people-centred policies. ILO constituents have also affirmed the importance of the ILO continuing to exercise firm, inclusive, and visionary leadership, reaffirming itself as the legitimate forum for tripartism and international cooperation.

Four thematic sessions and their content

Regarding the Meeting agenda, the Committee agreed to hold four thematic sessions covering the following topics:

1. Job creation, social protection, and sustainable development;
2. Strengthening democratic institutions, respect for fundamental rights, and institutionalized social dialogue;
3. A just transition toward resilient societies; and
4. Public policy strategies for improving skills and vocational training.

Subtopics were agreed upon for each thematic session to guide the development of the content of the Meeting Declaration and the roadmap.

The agenda and approach for each session were agreed upon. Points on which there was no consensus were left in square brackets in the text to be resolved in subsequent

meetings, although it was acknowledged that time was limited to achieve this.

The Secretariat—that is, the ILO Office—was tasked with drafting the following documents, based on the agreed-upon points, to facilitate the work of the constituents:

1. A preamble listing the subtopics and highlighting cross-cutting issues, such as gender, migration, and youth; and a brief introductory paragraph for each topic;
2. Concept notes, similar to those from the 19th American Regional Meeting in Panama, for each of the thematic sessions. These were shared as guidance notes by the ILO Regional Office

American Regional Meeting Motto

The Committee also agreed on the RRA's theme during its meetings. The following was agreed upon: "Democracy, peace, decent work, and social dialogue: uniting the Americas for a future of sustainable development and social justice."

Methodology

The Committee discussed and approved a methodology for the thematic sessions, as well as for the two interactive dialogues with tripartite constituents and one or two ILO directors, to be held during the lunch breaks on days 1 and 2, with an estimated duration of 30–40 minutes.

The topics for the two interactive dialogues were selected based on their relevance and the extensive work carried out by the Office in these areas. The topics selected for the interactive dialogues were:

- Presentation of the Regional Initiative for a Latin America and Caribbean Free of Child Labour
- Presentation of the Regional Strategy on Labour Migration and Human Mobility 2023–2030.

In these interactive dialogues, ILO Directors would participate as moderators and ask pre-agreed questions to the four participants: two government representatives, one employer representative, and one worker representative. It was recommended to use the questions suggested in the technical note on the respective topic.

In addition, it was agreed to set up four brief informational sessions (booths) during the coffee breaks between sessions. The *coffee breaks* (on the afternoon of Day 1, the

morning and afternoon of Day 2, and the morning of Day 3) would cover the following topics:

- Formalization (FORLAC 2.0)
- Regional Initiative for Social Dialogue
- Occupational Safety and Health
- Results of the survey on the application of the principles of the ILO Declaration on Multinational Enterprises in Latin America.

An Enriching Experience

This briefing note has sought to document the work of the Preparatory Steering Committee for the 20th American Regional Meeting as a positive experience of tripartite social dialogue at the regional level, based on the understanding that social dialogue is a dynamic process that contributes to the achievement of regional objectives.

It is worth highlighting the leadership exercised by the spokespersons of each of the tripartite actors in this process, with strong support and commitment from the Regional Directorate and the team of specialists at the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.

They proved to be key to the governance of the entire process, which, as noted, included both virtual and in-person sessions. Their active involvement throughout the process contributed to the adoption of the Punta Cana Declaration.

It is important to note that the process faced challenges during its implementation, due to the diversity of views among the constituents and the intensity and frequency of the preparatory meetings convened. However, the process demonstrated that it is possible to include representatives from all subregions in the various groups and, furthermore, that the interests of all subregions were reflected in the Declaration.

Finally, it is worth noting the strong interest and time commitment of the constituents' representatives to the success of the process and to the subsequent phase, which will involve monitoring the implementation of the Declaration, in line with the ILO's Strategic Plan 2026–2029 and Program and Budget 2026–2027. This is undoubtedly a sign of the constituents' ongoing commitment and satisfaction with the participatory process of drafting the Declaration, but above all with the governance of its implementation in the coming years. It also demonstrates that early involvement of social partners enriches and facilitates decision-making in all ILO processes.

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