



Ministry of Labour
and Social
Security, Jamaica



International
Labour
Organization



Caribbean
Congress
of Labour



Caribbean
Employers'
Confederation

**PROMOTING HUMAN PROSPERITY BEYOND
THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS:
Seeking Sustainable Solutions through Social Dialogue**

**CONCLUSIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION
TRIPARTITE CARIBBEAN CONFERENCE**

**HOSTED IN COLLABORATION WITH THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY
OF JAMAICA, THE CARIBBEAN CONGRESS OF LABOUR AND THE CARIBBEAN
EMPLOYERS' CONFEDERATION**

1-2 APRIL 2009, KINGSTON, JAMAICA

PREAMBLE

The high-level representatives of the governments, employers' and workers' organizations of the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean,¹

Having met in Jamaica 1-2 April 2009 and considered the crisis in the credit market and the employment crisis resulting from the global financial crisis and extending across all economies whether developed, emerging or developing;

Having discussed the specific challenges for the Caribbean region concerned with the impact on employment, sustainable enterprises, decent work, social security, social cohesion and national stability;

Recalling that the Georgetown Agreement, which established the African Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, calls for "sustainable development of its Member-States and their gradual integration into the global economy, which entails making poverty reduction a matter of priority and establishing a new, fairer, and more equitable world order";

Recalling the revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, Article VI which states: "The Community shall have the following objectives: (a) improved standards of living and work; (b) full

¹ Adopted by the representatives of the following member States and non-metropolitan territories: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

employment of labour and other factors of production; [and] (c) accelerated, coordinated and sustained economic development and convergence;”

Reaffirming the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work of 1998 as the platform for achieving Decent Work and the region’s commitment to promoting and realizing in law and practice these rights, namely, freedom of association and collective bargaining, no forced labour, no child labour and no discrimination in occupation and employment;

Having noted that these rights are also enshrined in the 1997 CARICOM Charter of Civil Society and the 1995 CARICOM Declaration of Labour and Industrial Principles, as well as the right to work and the opportunity to achieve a reasonable and secure standard of living;

Recalling the ILO Tripartite Declaration and Plan of Action for Realizing the Decent Work Agenda in the Caribbean, October 2006, and the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, June 2008;

Recognizing the importance of developing a coordinated international recovery and sustainable growth plan based on comprehensive and integrated policies for sustainable economic growth, for full and productive employment, and for Decent Work;

VISION STATEMENT

Commits to a united, internationally competitive and self-sufficient Caribbean Community realized through

- a. the implementation of sound and socially sensitive development policies that place all its peoples at the heart of social progress and economic advancement;
- b. social dialogue, mutual respect and partnership principles in governance that provide mechanisms whereby decent work, human prosperity, environmental sustainability, social justice, peace and stability are achieved; and
- c. fair and equitable provisions and implementation of free trade and development agreements entered into by the Caribbean; and

Have concluded that the following principles and actions are a desirable way forward:

CONCLUSIONS

1. PRINCIPLE: Implementation of holistic fiscal, employment and macro-economic policies which promote human and labour rights

Actions:

- a) Undertake human capital impact assessments as part of the development and implementation of macro-economic, labour and employment policies;
- b) Adopt employment-promoting macro-economic policies that foster increased investment, trade, competitiveness and job opportunities; and

c) Apply fair and equitable taxation systems.

2. PRINCIPLE: Implementation of sound and transparent oversight and regulatory control of financial services to minimize high-risk ventures that threaten our local and regional economies and to protect personal investment, including pensions.

Actions:

- a) Adopt and implement the CARICOM Financial Services Agreement; and
- b) Review financial market controls with a view to promoting:
 - i) Transparency;
 - ii) Truth in lending;
 - iii) Prudent economic underpinnings.

3. PRINCIPLE: Implementation of active labour market policies with the aim of sustaining and promoting employment, and which have as their basis, sound data and statistics on jurisdictions and regional economies and workplace trends and needs.

Actions:

- a) Collect, collate and analyse economic labour market data which should be a priority and aimed at enhancing social dialogue and political decision-making;
- b) Review and develop policies that focus on sustaining existing employment and which would guide actions aimed at job creation and protection as well as support to displaced workers; and
- c) Develop policies to provide support to displaced workers especially those most vulnerable to labour market shifts such as youth, women, persons with disabilities, migrant workers and informal sector workers.

4. PRINCIPLE - Protection of the most vulnerable by extending social safety nets.

Actions:

- a) Establish comprehensive social protection programmes [through collective bargaining, workplace policies and corporate and government social responsibilities], including the implementation of sustainable unemployment benefits coverage, which extends to the most vulnerable groups of workers including those in the informal sector as well as women, youth, migrant workers and persons with disabilities in the region; and

- b) Take action to preserve the gains achieved in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) particularly, in poverty reduction, maternal and infant mortality, gender equality, HIV, health and education.

5. PRINCIPLE - Increased access to credit for small and medium-sized enterprises especially informal economic undertakings.

Actions:

- a) Support for key growth sectors in the region by improving soft loan facilities, grants and entrepreneurial training covering financial management, and business planning and execution;
- b) Strengthen the capacity of all social partners to assist in the development of medium, small, and micro enterprises (MSME) through
 - i) Research to ascertain the needs of MSMEs and potential new sectors of operation in both the formal and informal economies;
 - ii) Lobbying for and providing easy credit access through national, regional and international lending and donor agencies;
 - iii) Actively pursuing and encouraging market accessibility in non-traditional and niche markets; and
 - iv) Networking with existing institutions, government agencies, financial institutions, and associations of small businesses to coordinate various efforts such as lobbying, research and training, and access to finance and markets.

6. PRINCIPLE: Transformation in education, innovation, training and re-training systems in the Caribbean.

Actions:

- a) Commit to a holistic, flexible and relevant education system for our peoples from early childhood to tertiary levels;
- b) Effectively align education, training and re-training with the employment and long-term skills needs of the region through consultation and collaboration with social partners;
- c) Preserve and increase, where possible, the expenditure and investment in education and human resource development by governments, employers and trade unions; and
- d) Ensure accreditation and proper regulation of education and training institutions.

7. **PRINCIPLE: Reform of International Financial Institutions to make them sensitive to the needs of developing countries and non-metropolitan territories.**

Actions:

- a) Advocate for access to credit on terms conducive to sustained development;
- b) Advocate for the reform and restructuring of existing institutions to promote fairness, and reduce economic policy conditions to a minimum;
- c) Establish new institutions reflective of the current environment with special programmes and systems catering to developing countries; and
- d) Call for the democratization of the decision-making structures of the International Financial Institutions in order to take into account the interests of all countries.

8. **PRINCIPLE: Enactment of legislation that protects wages and pensions of workers, including migrant workers:**

Actions:

- a) Guard against adjustments of wages and pensions without prior consultation with employers' and workers' organizations;
- b) Advocate close collaboration and information-sharing between regulatory bodies that negotiate employment policies at national and regional levels; and
- c) Establish mechanisms that protect and guarantee pensions of Caribbean workers at national and regional levels.

9. **PRINCIPLE: Strengthening mechanisms that foster social dialogue on a permanent basis at national and regional levels:**

Actions

- a) Enact legislation that supports and promotes social dialogue mechanisms;
- b) Develop structures that promote trust and respect, and invite tripartism; and
- c) Develop and implement incentive mechanisms that foster active tripartism.