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INFORMATION SESSION 2

Progress and Challenges in Eliminating Child Labour within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Framework

— Objectives

Latin America and the Caribbean is the region that has made the most progress in eliminating child labour in the last 20 years. The joint work by governments, employers' and workers' organizations, civil society, and international cooperation has significantly reduced by more than 9.5 million working children and adolescents between 2000 and 2016. However, the region still faces the challenging figure of 10.5 million children and adolescents aged 5 to 17 who continue to be engaged in child labour, representing 7.3 per cent of the total number of children and adolescents, of whom 6.3 million perform hazardous activities.

This situation calls for rapid and urgent action. To this end, within the framework of the 18th ILO - 19th American Regional Meeting (RRA), the **Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour Regional Initiative (RI)** was officially established, under the leadership of 28 countries in the region, with the active participation of employers' and workers' organizations, with the aim of accelerating the rate of eliminating child labour.

Within this framework, the objectives of this information session are:

1. To socialize the advances and challenges in eliminating child labour faced by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean within the framework of target 8.7 of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
2. To share the performance of the Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour Regional Initiative as an innovative mechanism led by tripartite constituents.

— Context

Child labour is one of the most serious and visible manifestations of inequality and decent work deficits, it is an obstacle to the development of human talent, to growth with inclusion, and it is a hindrance on the future of work we want.

During the last two decades, within the tripartite social dialogue framework, an important path of achievements and advances in the fight against child labour at a global level has been outlined. Four world conferences have been held, in Oslo, Norway (1997), The Hague, the Netherlands (2010), Brasilia, Brazil (2013), and Buenos Aires, Argentina (2017) which have been the main milestones of the progress achieved.

Constituents have a long history in the fight against child labour and count with various instruments to do so. Their commitment has made the elimination of child labour one of the goals achieved in advance of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, whose goal 8.7 calls for *“Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking, and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.”*

1) Legal Protection Framework

ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998) commits all member States, without exception, to respect and promote principles and rights in four categories, including the elimination of child labour.

ILO fundamental Conventions on Child Labour concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, 1973 (No. 138) and the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No. 182) form part of the eight fundamental conventions and address the protection of children and adolescents within the framework of International Labour Standards.

In addition, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), almost universal ratification, recognizes the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to be harmful or to interfere with the child's education.

2) **Impact of Child Labour on Human Development and Decent Work**

Child labour limits opportunities of children and adolescents, profoundly affects their personal development and such consequences extend throughout their lives. In other words, child labour has a structural impact that lasts throughout their life cycles.

Child labour takes place mainly in the informal economy, without social protection, in precarious conditions and in jobs that require low levels of competence. Early entry into the labour market, especially among low-income households, is one of the stakeholders perpetuating poverty and inequality, limiting access to training and the accumulation of human capital.

The prevention and elimination of child labour, especially in the worst forms, the guarantee of access to and permanence in the education system, and an effective transition from school to decent work and a break with gender stereotypes are fundamental objectives for facilitating development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Putting an end to child labour by 2025 means, in turn, advancing towards at least 35 goals that, under different SDGs, maintain a close interdependence with the elimination of child labour, which conditions the achievement of these 35 goals.

3) **The Persistence of the Problem**

152 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 are still involved in child labour worldwide, representing 9.6 per cent of the total population in that age range. Of these, 72.5 million - more than half - work in hazardous activities that seriously endanger their health, safety, and morals and, in certain circumstances, even their own lives.

Since the last ARM (Lima, October 2014), the number of children and adolescents involved in child labour in Latin America and the Caribbean has dropped by 16 per cent, from 12.5 million to 10.46 million, according to the latest World Estimates (ILO, 2017).

In the case of the worst forms of child labour, Latin America and the Caribbean has cut the regional rate of children involved in hazardous work by more than one third (-35 per cent), reducing the rate from 6.6 per cent to 4.3 per cent. However, this means that 6.3 million children and adolescents are still involved in jobs that directly threaten their health, safety or morals.

As for the concentration of child labour by sector in the region, more than 50 per cent of these children work in agriculture, followed by the service sector (35 per cent), and the industrial sector (13 per cent).

In addition, 37 per cent of all children involved in child labour are between the ages of 5 and 11 and 28 per cent between the ages of 12 and 14. This means that, irrespective of the activities they carry out, 65 per cent of children and adolescents involved in child labour are under the minimum age for employment.

In summary, based on what has been observed in the countries, it is possible to conclude that, between 2000 and 2016, the regional child labour rate fell, with different rates and alternating periods of significant reductions with others of greater stagnation. Nevertheless, millions of children and adolescents in the region are still left behind. This situation requires intense efforts of articulation to include this group of the population in the future of work we want.

— Articulating efforts to eliminate child labour in the region: from lima to panama

1) The Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Initiative

Created within the framework of the 3rd World Conference on Child Labour (Brasilia, 2013) and officially established at the 18th American Regional Meeting by the Ministers of Labour of the Region, the Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour Regional Initiative is an innovative platform for intergovernmental cooperation, based on social dialogue and with the active participation of employers' and workers' organizations. The Regional Initiative aims to unite the efforts of all stakeholders to accelerate the pace towards the elimination of child labour, as a matter of urgency, in order to accompany the first generation free of child labour and meet Target 8.7 of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Ministers of Labour of the member countries form the "High-Level Authority" and lead the Regional Initiative, provide political guidance, and define priorities for action. The operational level is articulated around the Focal Points Network, made up by government representatives appointed by the Ministers of Labour. This network also made up by regional representatives of employers' and workers' organizations. The ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, in line with the request of the Lima Declaration, provides the Technical Secretariat.

The Regional Initiative counts with instruments concerning its conceptual definition, planning, action, and structure arranging its operation and action. Such instruments were prepared and agreed upon by consensus.

The intuition constituents had in 2014 has proven to be visionary and fully relevant. The Regional Initiative is a mechanism ahead of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and has the advantage of having been a pioneer in the commitment endorsed by the constituents to accelerate the process towards the elimination of child labour. Its action is consistent with the global priorities reflected in 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (September, 2015) and in particular its Goal

8 and Target 8.7 to eliminate child labour by 2025. The work of the Regional Initiative is aligned with the deadlines given by the 2030 Agenda and has been organized in three phases:

- **Stage I 2014-2017** - Focused on building the institutional scaffold of the platform, its management and governance mechanisms, with the objective of having an organization and working mechanism to allow to advance in the achievement of the proposed results in a participatory, but strategic, manner.
- **Stage II 2018-2021** - Focused on each countries' national response, the application of instruments and tools developed within the Regional Initiative framework, to strengthen and energize national policies, programmes, and services in order to accelerate the elimination of child labour.
- **Stage III 2022-2025** – Focused on evaluation and sustainability, the aim is to assess the progress made and identify the lessons learned from the new intervention model proposed by the Regional Initiative with respect to strengthening the national response and progress in achieving regional and global commitments.

During its Stage I (2014 - 2017), the Regional Initiative implemented a regional acceleration strategy based on an updated analysis and reading of child labour. This strategy considers as priority the identification, design, and implementation of innovative mechanisms to overcome such issue; takes into account the regional situation and national realities; and is capable of providing responses adapted to the local context. To this end, the RI has relied especially on the implementation of national, sub-regional, and regional policies for the prevention and elimination of child labour, improving technical capacities and promoting greater budget allocation.

In this Stage I, the countries of the region together with employers' and workers' organizations, united in the Regional Initiative, have achieved:

- i. Articulate their actions through a flexible and dynamic structure that allows to foster ownership, align, and coordinate efforts to

- design a comprehensive response to a specific problem, and increase the use of resources, especially through its Focal Points Network.
- ii. Forge alliances with new stakeholders, who have intensified their commitment as key stakeholders to energize society in its commitment to zero tolerance of child labour.
 - iii. Position the RI as a platform for political debate among member countries and institutions on the priority of the objective of prevention and elimination of child labour.
 - iv. Value the capacities and lessons learned of its partners and build a source of new knowledge on the current situation of child labour and its implications with key issues, which have now been subsumed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development framework.
 - v. Promote South-South cooperation among member countries and institutions, in which 82 cooperation agreements have been reached among the members of the Regional Initiative.
 - vi. Design a Framework for Accelerating Policies, which constitutes an intervention strategy to maximize the scope of existing public programmes and services in the countries of the region in order to interrupt the child labour trajectory.
 - vii. Design and implement a Risk Model for Child Labour, based on using extensively the information available in the countries in order to strengthen the national response to child labour in a cost-effective manner.
 - viii. Implement in the countries of Pilot Group 1 (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru) the First Stage of the Risk Model for Child Labour, to identify and prioritize child labour-prone territories, generating evidence for the countries to target their efforts in those areas so as to accelerate elimination of child labour.

During its Stage II, the Regional Initiative will implement its strategies to accelerate the pace of child labour reduction. These strategies combine approaches to prevent, protect, and restore rights;

substitute unauthorized activities by authorized activities; and effective judicial protection and immediate withdrawal, with the aim of (i) achieving the first generation free of child labour by 2025, applying priority measures for age groups from 0 to 17 years; (ii) removing child labour of children below the minimum age for admission to employment and adolescents from hazardous work; and (iii) eradicating forms of criminal exploitation. In this stage, experimental applications will be carried out in prioritized countries and sectors. In addition, the interaction of stakeholders and the generation of multipartite networks will be strengthened, for example with civil society organisations and academic organizations, as well as specialized UN agencies.

At the beginning of Stage III, there will be new estimates that will give an account of the advances in the prevention and eradication of child labour, presented within the framework of the V Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour. These data will make it possible to report on the success achieved by constituents with the support of the ILO, which, within the Regional Initiative framework, will have implemented Stages I and II of the Risk Model for Child Labour. The progress made in territorializing the response to target 8.7 of the SDGs will have resulted in the development of maps that report on the child labour-prone territories in each of the prioritized countries and, based on the evidence gathered, in the subsequent adaptation of public policies to address children and adolescents at risk. During this stage, action will be taken at two main levels: (i) in the area of prevention, with the aim of consolidating the gains made and ruling out regressive effects and (ii) in terms of consolidating a comprehensive response to child labour, adapting the response through the design and adaptation of public policies and services.

2) IV Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour

The IV Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour, hosted by Argentina (Buenos Aires, November 2017), was the first specific global event on the issue of child labour

after the adoption of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in direct correlation with target 8.7.

The IV Conference was a milestone and an ideal platform for the region to show the progress made in the process of eradicating child labour and protecting adolescent workers, to advance in determining follow-up mechanisms and sustainability of the commitments assumed, to share with other regions experiences on cooperation, including South-South cooperation, and to address one of the main pending challenges, the mobilization of technical and financial resources for the achievement of goal 8.7 with regard to child labour.

The main outcome of the IV Conference was the Buenos Aires Declaration, which included an explicit reference to the RI. In addition, the Government of Argentina promoted the formulation of promises, as a mechanism to transform the will of stakeholders into concrete and superseding commitments that would contribute to the effective achievement of target 8.7 of the SDGs. Latin America and the Caribbean was the region with the highest number of pledges.

The commitments shown by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean within the framework of the IV Conference pave the way and mark the path for the efforts of the different stakeholders that must be articulated to achieve the first generation free of child labour by 2025.

3) The Challenges Faced by the Region in Accelerating the Pace of Eliminating Child Labour

In order to advance towards the achievement of goal 8.7 and offer a future with more opportunities and less inequality to the more than 202 million children and adolescents of the Americas, the constituents have to face a number of challenges, among which the following stand out:

- i. Effectively strengthen the preventive approach to child labour in the countries.
- ii. Intensify the implementation of strategies to withdraw children and adolescents below the minimum age, particularly those carrying out hazardous work.
- iii. Strengthen strategies to protect and/or recon-vert work for adolescents of working age.
- iv. Strengthen strategies to address illicit forms of child labour.
- v. Strengthen and implement regional, national, and local plans for the prevention and eradication of child labour.
- vi. Expand baseline information.
- vii. Mobilize domestic and development cooperation resources for the prevention and eradication of child labour.