



## 19th American Regional Meeting

Panama City, Panama, 2–5 October 2018

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# Panama Declaration for the ILO Centenary: The future of work in the Americas

## I. Preamble

1. We, the Government, Employers' and Workers' delegates of the Americas to the 19th American Regional Meeting of the International Labour Organization (ILO), have examined the future of work in the region to develop a vision of how to prepare a better future of work for present and future generations.
2. The meeting took place on the eve of the ILO Centenary, a highly symbolic time to make an effective contribution with respect to the challenges and opportunities of the future of work and the role of the ILO. These conclusions have been drafted on the basis of the Report of the ILO Director-General entitled *Preparing the future of work we want in the Americas through social dialogue* and all the meeting discussions of the report.
3. Four years on from the last ILO American Regional Meeting, global uncertainty is running high. In addition, we have identified in the region: low and fluctuating economic growth, insufficient productive development and low productivity; high levels of informality and inequality; increasing unemployment and poverty; various deficits in the respect for and application of the fundamental principles and rights at work of workers and employers; challenges related to the effects of environmental development on employment; reduced social security coverage and sustainability; and negative effects on the creation of employment and sustainable enterprises.
4. The experience of the past four years has shown that, without sustained growth, social progress may stall or even be reversed. According to the Director-General's Report to this meeting, three lessons can be drawn from recent experience: (a) increased productivity and productive diversification are key to sustained, inclusive and sustainable growth; (b) without fiscal space, which is largely associated with strong and sustainable growth and a reduction in the high levels of public debt, redistributive policies soon reach their limits; and (c) structural gaps persist if specific, long-term measures are not adopted to bridge them. Therefore, investment and sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth are essential for generating decent and productive employment, and for reducing inequalities in the Americas.
5. Achieving a better future of work is possible, by strengthening democracy, and it depends on us. However, this future can be built only through a collective effort, by strengthening democratic governance – currently at risk in various countries in the hemisphere – through social dialogue between governments, employers and workers, with a long-term perspective, upholding the rule of law, fighting corruption and strengthening our institutions. We reaffirm

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our commitment to freedom, social justice, democracy and the principles and institutions in which they are grounded.

6. The ILO must continue to play a leadership role in the world of work. A strong, effective and relevant ILO, adapted to face the contemporary challenges of the world of work, is in everyone's interest. With this in mind, we must take advantage of the ILO Centenary in 2019 to: strengthen the instruments of international cooperation and innovative development partnerships; expand the means to share good practices; express our appreciation for engagement in multilateral forums and for effective tripartism and social dialogue; and strengthen the body of standards and the supervisory system for international labour standards, especially to increase transparency and efficiency within the terms of the ILO's mandate.
7. In order to advance towards a better future for production and work, it is necessary to generate and strengthen the culture of work and respect for the rights of and compliance with the obligations of the parties involved in the labour relationship; foster entrepreneurship; and create more and better forums and capacities for strategic reflection and planning that promote the development and implementation of long-term programmes and policies. We undertake to foster the creation and strengthening of such institutional forums.
8. Mitigating the negative effects and leveraging the opportunities of technological revolutions are among the greatest challenges facing the present and future of work and production, and require responses integrating technological innovation, education and vocational training systems, and lifelong training.
9. This document establishes priorities for the International Labour Office and the ILO constituents of the region for the next four years, which should inform policy development. The objective is to achieve sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth to create productive employment and decent work in the Americas, as reflected in Goal 8 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda).
10. We recognize that, during Argentina's presidency of the G20, the future of work, and particularly its link to education, was established as a core topic.

## II. How to build a better future of work

11. Building a better future of work requires action in multiple areas. Therefore, it is necessary to develop the following policy priorities:
  - (i) **Productive development policies** applicable to the industrial, agricultural, commercial and service sectors are essential to generate sustained, inclusive and sustainable high growth, and more and better jobs. Without a better future for production, there cannot be a better future for work, and vice versa. These policies include: development of sustainable enterprises; support for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises; improved integration into value chains; increased production linkages for small and medium-sized enterprises; development of policies on clusters that promote collaboration between all relevant public and private agents in the cluster; innovation policies; policies that facilitate entry into new industries, markets and value chains; the promotion and facilitation of the adoption of new production paradigms associated with rapid technological change for the benefit of workers, businesses and society as a whole.
  - (ii) **Policies to promote an enabling environment for the creation and development of enterprises**, in accordance with the resolution concerning the promotion of sustainable enterprises adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2007,

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including the principles of sustainable enterprises, free enterprise and respect for the right to private property.

- (iii) **Policies to promote respect for fundamental principles and rights at work** are essential. To that end, we propose to: better align labour legislation and national practice with international labour standards; strengthen labour administration and inspection; and improve access to swift and effective labour justice and to effective mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of labour disputes.
- (iv) **Policies to promote respect for freedom of association and collective bargaining**, set out in the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), the Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978 (No. 151), and the Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154), including the identification and elimination of legal restrictions on the exercise of these rights, guaranteeing due protection and respect for the exercise of union rights.
- (v) **Policies to promote the transition from the informal to the formal economy** are important for inclusive growth. The ILO Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), is useful as a coherent and integrated policy framework.
- (vi) **Workforce development policies** are key to building a better future of work. Vocational education and training systems that respond to the present and future needs of employers and workers can be achieved through robust education and training systems that include lifelong learning. We emphasize the need to promote synergies between education, vocational training and the world of work to match labour supply and demand. These policies must be aligned with policies on productive development and attracting investment.
- (vii) **Policies to promote environmental sustainability and to address the employment impacts of climate change** are important to build a better future of work. Natural disasters, climate phenomena, rising sea levels, changes in cycles of rain and droughts are all phenomena that have an impact on the world of work and sources of employment. The small island developing States of the Caribbean face specific challenges, in particular because they are prone to natural disasters.
- (viii) **Policies to promote equal opportunities and achieve greater social justice** require a multifaceted approach that may include a balanced and coherent combination of economic growth, fiscal, employment, social protection and education and vocational training policies, as well as productive development policies to sustain growth and reduce the structural heterogeneity that is at the root of inequality.
- (ix) **Wage policies** are a key element for reducing poverty, discrimination and income inequalities. Minimum wage policies play a central role in that regard. These policies must aim at linking economic productivity to wage trends. Collective bargaining plays a fundamental role in that link. More must be done to reduce the gender wage gap.
- (x) **Policies to respond to the new and diverse forms of employment** created by technological revolutions and new business models are central to the future of work in the region. It is possible to address this reality with a balanced combination of policies to eliminate regulatory gaps, and strengthen collective bargaining, social protection and quality employment policies. This combination must in turn promote the creation, maintenance and development of enterprises.

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- (xi) **Social protection policies** are key when it comes to building a better future of work in the region. Private and public social protection systems are a core element in that regard. Systems that are financially sustainable through appropriate contributions and providing broad coverage of risks and contingencies foster social cohesion and contribute to achieving strong social pacts and social justice. We reiterate the importance of national social protection floors, in accordance with the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202).
  - (xii) **Policies to promote a just transition** in the framework of the conclusions concerning achieving decent work, green jobs and sustainable development, adopted at the 102nd Session of the International Labour Conference (2013). Promote the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930, and the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (March 2017), in agreement with the tripartite constituents of the Governing Body of the ILO.
  - (xiii) **Policies to foster productive, rights-based youth employment**, as well as entrepreneurship and the creation of formal enterprises by young people, which address the challenges and seizing the opportunities that arise, in particular in the digital economy and through the technological revolution.
  - (xiv) **Policies to accelerate the eradication of child labour**, while at the same time ensuring the protection of adolescent labour, in conformity with fundamental principles and rights at work. The regional initiative Latin America and Caribbean Free of Child Labour is a relevant and current mechanism that contributes to efforts undertaken by countries to achieve target 8.7 of the 2030 Agenda. This will enable follow-up action to be taken on the agreements of the IV Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour, held in Buenos Aires in November 2017.
  - (xv) **Policies to prevent and combat discrimination** against indigenous peoples and persons of African descent, persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV and AIDS, older people and LGBTI populations, in order to promote their integration into the labour market with full respect for their rights and in compliance with labour relations obligations.
  - (xvi) **Policies to promote gender equality** and non-discrimination in labour markets, including measures to combat gender stereotypes; to encourage the application of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value; to increase the value and recognition given to care work; and to prevent and combat violence and harassment in the world of work.
  - (xvii) **Labour migration policies** that respect the human and labour rights of migrant workers, including in particular the prevention of forced labour, trafficking in persons and modern slavery, and that facilitate the procedures for migrant workers sending remittances to their family members in their countries of origin.

**12.** It is important that the aforementioned policies promote coherence between the objectives of economic growth and the creation of productive employment and decent work, incorporating a gender perspective. Ensuring greater policy coherence is the responsibility of all stakeholders. Therefore, dialogue between governments, employers and workers is essential for these policies to be viable and sustainable and to respond to the needs of the world of work in the present and in the future.

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### **III. Lines of action for the future**

- 13.** We, governments, workers and employers, consider the following lines of action to be fundamental to building a better future of work. We call upon the ILO to provide assistance to that end in order to:
- (i) ensure strict adherence to the principles of freedom, democracy and social justice, the rule of law and respect for human and labour rights;
  - (ii) contribute to strengthening democratic institutions by supporting well-functioning labour administrations and effective labour law enforcement in the formal and informal economies, and make every effort to prevent and combat corruption;
  - (iii) build and strengthen forums and capacities for social dialogue between governments, workers and employers that facilitate participation in the strategic design, planning and implementation of long-term programmes and policies, and strengthen the technical, operational and political capacities of employers' and workers' organizations to enable their effective participation in those forums and bodies.
- 14.** International cooperation, including South–South and triangular cooperation, and support from international organizations, the United Nations system and the development banks are crucial for the implementation of the priority policies set out in this document. We urge the ILO to pursue appropriate collaboration with these entities, including with reference to the 2030 Agenda.
- 15.** The ILO should continue to play a leadership role in the area of labour migration in the framework of the United Nations system, including in the timely implementation of the labour-related aspects of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.
- 16.** We request the International Labour Office to reinforce its internal capacities to promote the policy areas indicated in section II, and to support the constituents in all of them, using all available means of action. We also request the ILO Regional Office to prepare a plan of key activities that is available for consultation and information.