YOUTH IN THE NEW ERA OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Thoughts on the presentations and discussions at the International Forum on “Employment, Youth and Democratic Governance”
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International Labour Office
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Youth in the new era of social justice
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS 4

FOREWORD 5

INTRODUCTION 9

1. REALITIES AND PERSPECTIVES IN AN UNCERTAIN PERIOD 12
   1.1 The political situation: an opportunity and three crises 14
   1.2 The economic and social situation: global uncertainty, local challenges 16
   1.3 Youth and employment: diversity and inequality 20

2. ELEMENTS FOR ACTION 26
   2.1 International coordination 27
   2.2 Employment and social protection as public policy goals 29
   2.3 The virtuous circle of education, employment and development 32
   2.4 Enterprises and labour rights: an indivisible union 38

3. BY WAY OF CONCLUSION: CHALLENGES FOR THE ILO 42

PARTICIPANTS IN THE FORUM 46
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAF:</td>
<td>Andean Development Corporation</td>
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<td>ECLAC:</td>
<td>United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
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<td>G20:</td>
<td>Group of 20 major industrial and emerging countries</td>
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<td>IDB:</td>
<td>Inter-American Development Bank</td>
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<td>IILS:</td>
<td>International Institute for Labour Studies</td>
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<td>ILO:</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<td>ILO/CINTERFOR:</td>
<td>International Labour Organization/Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training</td>
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<td>IMF:</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>IYO:</td>
<td>Ibero-American Youth Organization</td>
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<td>OAS:</td>
<td>Organization of American States</td>
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<td>OECD:</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>R+D+I:</td>
<td>Research, development and innovation</td>
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<tr>
<td>SENATI:</td>
<td>National Industrial Training Service, Peru</td>
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<tr>
<td>TUCA:</td>
<td>Trade Union Confederation of the Americas</td>
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Young people have always been a driving force for social and political change. That is an undeniable fact of life. Just pick up a newspaper --any newspaper-- any day, and read about the key role being played by young people in a world not yet recovered from the effects of a crisis that left the most developed economies reeling at the close of the past decade. A very different world from the one that existed barely ten years earlier, at the opening of the millennium. The surge of the emerging countries and the simultaneous decline of the traditional powers are only one piece of today’s new global puzzle.

The International Labour Organization is well-aware of youth’s enormous potential for bringing about change, together with its discontent with the
situation as it stands today. A change is needed in policies that affect young people, in order to be able to take advantage of and channel their energy and enthusiasm into attaining more sustainable and equitable development, where the notion and practice of decent and productive work is made a reality. Although the distinguishing features of this change are still uncertain, what is obvious is that youth must be given a leading role to play in the search for solutions. The fact is that when recession looms, they are the first to lose their jobs and the last to recover them. Unless society is able to create jobs for them, young people tend to become disenchanted with democratic institutions. Youth unemployment and underemployment make it impossible to benefit from the potential offered by the best educated and trained generation the region has ever seen, thus holding back its development.

All of this is taking place in a climate of uncertainty, in a world teeming with some 200 million unemployed. In the next decade alone, 400 million new jobs will have to be created just to cover the increase in the working age population. These young people are educated and trained and hold great expectations. Latin America and the Caribbean, a region that --on average-- did not suffer the ill effects of the 2008-2009 crisis to the extent predicted, must confront this new episode. It is faced by a slowdown of growth in Europe, the United States, China and India that will undoubtedly be detrimental to its economies.

It is not enough to ask ourselves at this point how the crisis will affect the region. Instead, we must ponder what we can do to design strategies for addressing it. What must the State and society do to maintain governance and safeguard the citizens, while favoring inclusion and social justice? What steps can be taken by the governments, trade unions and employers’ organizations in the region’s countries to cope with the possible impact of a new international crisis? It will be necessary to consider the probable impact on employment --particularly of young people--, social programmes and investment flows, among other
variables that are quite likely to be affected. What support can and should the International Labour Office give its constituents in the region?

For over a decade, the ILO has been declaring that the answer is to be found in decent work: the basic instrument for overcoming poverty and exclusion and for developing societies that are more cohesive and economies that are more prosperous and competitive. G20 also espoused this principle, adopting the Global Jobs Pact of 2009 as a guideline for action. Many countries in the region have also adopted this idea, considering its potential as inspiration for public policies and private initiatives to promote quality jobs with rights, whose productivity will ensure social protection.

Experiences in the region have already laid the groundwork. These centre on boosting public and private investment, both national and international, innovation, productivity, the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, social protection, cash transfer programmes, wage protection, and the promotion of fundamental rights at work, among other things. There is, however, a deeply-entrenched situation that is proving very difficult to change: the continued existence of pockets of poverty and a high level of inequality that are closely tied in with discrimination on the grounds of sex, ethnic origin or race. Fully one-half of the workers in the region still labour in the informal economy under precarious conditions, unprotected and unable to enjoy labour rights. Many jobs, both formal and informal, are still far from being what we could consider decent work.

The questions raised and the certainties that have been touched upon in the preceding paragraphs convinced us, in the ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, that it was both timely and relevant to organize a symposium in which to discuss these issues, which centre particularly on the labour situation of young people in today’s world. In this undertaking, we have
enjoyed the technical support of the ILO’s International Institute for Labour Studies (IILS).

Youth’s inclusion depends upon the implementation of policies that have been discussed and brought to fruition, as part of an integral framework for the promotion of economic development and growth with employment. What is needed, then, are courage and innovation on the part of policy makers and action and dialogue among the social partners --employers and workers--, represented at this Forum. Social dialogue, respect for trade union rights and freedom of association, collective bargaining and a favourable climate for creating sustainable enterprises are all requisites for this inclusion. Young people have taken to the streets, clamouring for answers from democratic regimes that are called upon to give them opportunities. Let us listen carefully to what they are saying and act accordingly, in order to rebuild their trust.

Elizabeth Tinoco
Assistant Director-General and
Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean
International Labour Office
INTRODUCTION

“The world needs a new era of social justice inspired by a vision of sustainable development. An era where people’s needs, care for our planet Earth and fairness guide policy making; an era where the benefits of globalization are shared equitably; an era that can spark hope in our youth, creativity in our societies and the credibility of our public and private policies and institutions; an era where the dignity of work is promoted and respected; an era where voice, participation and democracy flourish.”

This vision, which has guided the efforts of the International Labour Organization ever since its creation in 1919, has taken on enormous importance in the current international context of troubling uncertainty. It also served as an inspiration for the International Forum on “Employment, Youth and Democratic Governance,” organized by the ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean and the International Institute for Labour Studies in December 2011, which sparked a frank and open discussion of the relationship between decent work and development, in the light of young people’s needs. There can be no question that this discussion was of the utmost importance, timeliness and relevance in the context of a global crisis that is affecting the general population --and youth even more heavily-- in all regions and countries across the world, to a varying degree.

This document was prepared based on the presentations and discussions at the Forum, where the participants included outstanding representatives of the academic world, international institutions, governments, and employers’ and workers’ organizations throughout the region (see complete list attached). The intent is not to give a literal account of the sessions, but, rather, to reflect on the results of the discussions of the international context, its impact on the region, the countries’ own capacities, the challenges they face in moving ahead with an agenda that focuses on decent work and the areas in which progress is needed. The questions asked and observations made by participants at the Forum, and particularly the comments of workers and employers, served to enrich the presentations, which in themselves were valuable as elements of information and analysis. The Office has taken due note of the concern expressed by representatives of employers’ and workers’ organizations at the close of the Forum over the need to give fuller and more careful consideration to their viewpoints in panel discussions. Future meetings of this kind will accordingly take greater advantage of the rich potential of tripartitism.

This report has been organized into two sections: the first summarizes the diagnosis of the current context, touching upon political and socio-economic elements, and makes an approach to the situation and prospects of the region’s youth. The second outlines areas for action on key issues like international policy coordination, the inclusion of job creation and social protection at the heart of public policies, the virtuous circle of education, employment and development, and the key role played by sustainable enterprises and labour rights. The report concludes by setting down some brief thoughts about the challenges posed for the ILO in these spheres.

This text was prepared by the ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean based on the presentations and discussions at the Forum. Technical reports were also prepared and made available by a team of rapporteurs (consisting of Oscar Cetrángolo, Guillermo Dema, Florencio Gudiño, Andrés
Marinakis, Álvaro Ramírez and Fernando Vargas), Rocío Guijarro and Carlos Raúl Hernández. We would like to express our appreciation to all of them for their contributions.

To conclude, the Regional Office and the International Institute for Labour Studies wish to thank the moderators and the panelists --mentioned throughout the document-- and also José Miguel Insulza, Secretary General of the OAS, for his keynote address, and representatives of the groups of employers and of workers --particularly Dagoberto Lima Godoy, Employer Member of the ILO Administrative Council; Amanda Villatoro, Secretary for Trade Union Policy and Education of the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA); and Octavio Rubio, from Colombia’s General Labour Confederation, who participated in the opening and closing sessions, --and all participants from the delegations and from the Government of the Republic of Peru, who followed the event through the presence, at the highest government levels, of Foreign Minister Rafael Roncagliolo at the opening session and Labour and Promotion Minister José Villena at the closing session, while Minister of Economy and Finance, Luis Miguel Castilla, took part in one of the panel discussions.
The first part of the forum examined Latin America and the Caribbean’s political and socio-economic situation in the present global context. That was the aim of the opening address, delivered by the Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), José Miguel Insulza. The subject was also taken up in the first panel discussion ("Global crisis and governance"), in which María Angélica Ducci, Executive Director of the ILO Director-General’s Cabinet, was the moderator and the participants were Luis Miguel Castilla Rubio, Minister of Economy and Finance of Peru; Nicolás Eyzaguirre, Director of the Western Hemisphere Department of the International Monetary Fund (IMF); Antonio Prado, Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); and Arturo Valenzuela, Professor of Government and founding Director of the Center for Latin American Studies at Georgetown University.
All of the presentations stressed the very high levels of uncertainty that exist today, due particularly to the situation in Europe. A series of elements emerged from the discussion, however, that serve to shine a light on the regional scenario in which the ILO must act, today and over the next few years, to further its decent work agenda.

The analysis produced aggregate information for the region as a whole, although national examples and important nuances emerged during the course of the forum. The thoughts presented below are, in any case, generalizations that serve to illustrate a constantly evolving situation, but that must be placed in context to permit a more detailed analysis of the conditions in each individual country.

Panel 1: Global crisis and governance. From left to right, Antonio Prado (ECLAC); Arturo Valenzuela (Georgetown University), Luis Miguel Castilla (Minister of Economy and Finance, Peru), Nicolás Eyzaguirre (IMF) and María Angélica Ducci (ILO).
1.1 THE POLITICAL SITUATION: AN OPPORTUNITY AND THREE CRISSES

The Forum was held in 2011, on the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter. This instrument is a milestone in the region’s democratization process after decades marked by authoritarian regimes and armed conflicts. Democracy, today, is the only form of government in the region that is recognized as being legitimate. That is probably the biggest newsmaker of the past twenty years in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The large majority of the governments today are chosen by democratic methods through free, secret, well-informed and competitive elections. Freedom of expression and plural choices among political parties are essential elements of a democracy. These offer a major opportunity for constructing policies legitimately, thereby facilitating their implementation and, with this, the success of government measures.

An analysis of the true political situation, however, cannot fail to take into account the continued existence of a high level of citizen dissatisfaction with the performance and results of democratically elected political powers. It is also necessary to look into the reasons why some governments fail to reach the end of the terms of office for which they were elected. In this connection, three challenges or “crises” can be distinguished that affect the political systems in Latin America and the Caribbean to differing degrees in each country.

The first is the crisis of representation, as reflected in the loss of faith in parliamentarians or representatives and in political parties. This is a particularly crucial issue in complex democracies like those in the region, where the effective and sustained implementation of appropriate public policies over time depends upon the existence of coalitions among parties. In this area, it is also necessary to stress the failure of
young people to participate in politics, both within parties and in other representative institutions, particularly trade unions.

- The second is the **crisis of the rule of law**, which is reflected in high levels of corruption, judicial inefficiency and mismanagement, in general, on the part of institutions created to ensure full respect for citizens’ rights in the face of the legitimate use of force by the State. Public insecurity is both an expression and a consequence of this crisis.

- The third is the **crisis in governance**. The failure of the executive and legislative powers to reach agreements in some countries has created situations where presidents have no support. Needed political reforms are immobilized by this inability to cooperate and fail to be incorporated by the political system. Confronted by this power vacuum, people may be attracted by autocratic and even messianic proposals, which further eat away at the foundations of democratic institutions.

**Quality of institutions, quality of governance**

“Much is still to be desired, insofar as the consolidation of democratic institutions in the region is concerned. Weaknesses proliferate. We cannot limit ourselves to the underlying economic issues, but must also examine the quality of the institutions, for without quality institutions (...), all that has been advanced will be lost. In the end, what counts is a well-functioning government.”

Arturo Valenzuela
In order to build better political institutions at all levels --representation, policy-making, governance-- that will give meaning to the people’s participation, these three crises must first be resolved. People must be made to feel that they are part of a community where the means exist to reach basic agreements that will move them ahead on the road to economic and social progress.

1.2 THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SITUATION: GLOBAL UNCERTAINTY, LOCAL CHALLENGES

From the socio-economic viewpoint, the first and unavoidable conclusion to be reached is that it is impossible for the Latin American and Caribbean countries to hide themselves behind locked doors from the international crisis that is wreaking havoc, particularly in Europe. Its effects are also being felt in other parts of the developed and emerging world, as witness the slow growth in the United States and Japan and the slowdown in China and India. Continuing fluctuations in key economic variables and flows are creating uncertainty. Governments, enterprises, trade unions and international organizations are being required to pay close attention to events and to be ready to bring their policies into line with those changes.

The crisis has also marked the end of a period during which wealth accumulation based on financial development was favored over that resting on the growth of production. Today, the role of public policy is being revalued as an instrument for achieving growth and more sustainable and equitable development, thereby avoiding a second great depression.

This global uncertainty is compounded in Latin America and the Caribbean by the region’s need to address its own problems, which have to do particularly with poverty, inequality and informality.
Over the past decade, progress in this region has been extremely significant in social terms. The declining poverty rates and improvement in employment and social protection variables bear this out. This progress can be attributed in large part to its active and passive labour market policies --including wage protection-- and social programmes, particularly those of conditional cash transfers. Continued poverty alleviation measures are mandatory, although sizeable reductions are becoming harder and harder to come by, for the people who are still poor belong to the structurally most vulnerable and marginalized groups. The region’s countries must definitely be made aware that before poverty can be mitigated, all forms of discrimination must first be eliminated.

**Discrimination as a factor explaining the existence of poverty**

“In 2010, poverty and extreme poverty reached their lowest levels of the past 20 years --a major accomplishment for our region. Even so, it is unacceptable that some 175 million people continue to live below the poverty level. This goes to show that we still have a task awaiting us. Let us be realistic: we are not talking about poor people who are faceless, raceless and genderless... We are talking about most of the indigenous populations, who are poor; most of the people of African descent, who are poor, and a disproportionate number of single-parent households headed by women, that are poor. Discrimination based on gender and race plays a basic role in creating poverty. We cannot talk about poverty as a homogenous package, for we know what our real Achilles heel is: discrimination.”

José Miguel Insulza, Conferencia Inaugural
The region has also experienced improvements in equality, but these are less pronounced than those made in the case of poverty. Structural heterogeneity continues to be widespread among Latin American and Caribbean economies. This has led to the existence of highly productive, advanced and competitive sectors side-by-side with others where productivity is extremely low, but which account for the lion’s share of the jobs. It is this heterogeneity which, together with discrimination, accounts in large part for the continued existence of inequality in the region.

Another challenge that confronts Latin American and Caribbean economies today is their renewed emphasis on the production of core commodities. The boom in prices of these commodities has been and continues to be of key importance in ensuring the stability of fiscal accounts. Even so, the concentration of raw material and natural resource exports threatens to widen the structural gap in the region’s economies.

There is a growing political awareness of the need to bridge both the economic and the social gaps that keep large sectors of the population from accessing public goods, by dismantling the “factories” that generate inequality, such being differences in skills, education and productivity. Industrial, innovation, education and employment policies need to be designed and implemented for that purpose, but first sufficient fiscal resources must be available to finance development programmes.

**Social gaps, education and development financing**

“"Inclusion requires closing gaps, particularly a very important gap that has to do with access to quality education (...) This calls for the combined efforts of a more productive society with higher real wages, insertion into labour markets with quality jobs which, in turn, will enable
us to maintain the real growth rates needed to reduce poverty, as the main tool for achieving the people’s inclusion and improved wellbeing.”

Luis Miguel Castilla Rubio

“These are the gaps the region still displays: inequality, little investment, a low tax burden [about 18%, on average] and insufficient productivity, relative to both other economies and to other sectors within the Latin American countries themselves. Here we find the existence of ‘factories of inequality’. Quality education must be advanced significantly, if productivity and capacity for innovation are to be improved.”

Antonio Prado

“[Latin America and the Caribbean] mobilize less income than other countries at our same level of development and of countries, now developed, when their income was at our level. There is a measure of social injustice here that has accumulated over the years and must now be turned around, if we are to harmonize growth with the training of human capital, with infrastructure and, therefore, with more integral development...[This must be accomplished] using modern economic policies, with a sustainable macroeconomy and therefore with tax revenues that do not result --as in Europe’s case-- in a disruption of economic growth arising out of a lack of credibility.”

Nicolás Eyzaguirre
The arsenal of counter-cyclical policies most countries in the region drew on to defend themselves from the crisis of 2008-2009 pushed up their public debt, which today stands at a level much higher than that of the middle of the past decade. With the prospect of a slowdown in the offing, it is necessary to rebuild these defenses, so that the State can come to the aid of the economy as a whole with expansive fiscal policies, particularly to defend the most vulnerable sectors. This “economic rearmament” should be sought though an increase in income and not a cut in social spending -- on education, health and protection-- or in public investment in infrastructure, which would affect the countries’ competitiveness in the long term and their governance immediately. The region can attain more integral development, even in the context of an international crisis, by harmonizing growth, human capital formation and progress in infrastructure.

1.3 YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT: diversity AND INEQUALITY

This section is based essentially on the presentations of panel 2 (“Employment as a driving force for social inclusion”), moderated by journalist Mariella Balbi. The panelists were Eduardo Brenta, Minister of Labour and Social Security of Uruguay; José Carrera, Andean Development Corporation (CAF) Vice President of Social and Environmental Development; Fabián Andrés Koss, Youth Development Coordinator in the Office of External Relations of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB); and Alejo Ramírez, Secretary General of the Ibero-American Youth Organization (IYO). Furthermore, the following chapter detailing elements for action once again takes up aspects of the presentations, particularly as regards employment, social protection and the virtuous circle of education, employment and development.
The young people’s situation in Latin America and the Caribbean can be explained in two words: diversity and inequality. Diversity means cultural wealth, a capacity for differentiation and a capacity for integration in accordance with existing differences. Inequality, on the other hand, affects the way young people are able to “administer” their lives. Those in the top quintile of the income distribution scale study up to the age of 33, live with their parents up until their 30s and decide to become parents at the age of 35. Those in the bottom quintile, however, are unable to decide for themselves; they are forced to go out into the labour market at an early age, either because they have become parents at 16 or because the family has decided that girls should leave school to take care of their younger brothers and sisters, or help with household tasks. As a result, the capacity to administer their own youth is a capital that not all young people share equally.

The youth employment situation in the region, for its part, constitutes a paradox: although today’s young people are the best educated and trained in
its history, they also have the highest unemployment rates (which could even double or triple that of the adults). The region’s labour markets appear to be almost structurally incapable of creating enough quality jobs to keep up with population growth. Under these circumstances, the so-called “demographic bonus” becomes a challenge. It can be a bonus if enough young people are able to obtain productive jobs; otherwise, it will be a burden. It has become more pressing than ever to guarantee a relevant, good quality education tailored to the needs of enterprises and modern societies today. The large numbers of young people who neither study, nor work, make it essential to address this issue on two fronts: employment and education, which are just two sides of the same coin, youth’s successful social inclusion.

At the same time, technological change calls into question current teaching contents and capacities has created challenges and uncertainties for educational systems at all levels across the world. Unemployment or less skilled and more poorly paid jobs proliferate among young people who have been unable to acquire the up-to-date knowledge needed for the application of the new technologies.

Innovative programmes must be developed to serve young people who are not studying or who have no jobs. These programmes should focus not only on conventional vocational training, but also on the application of alternative strategies involving sports or culture. This will enable them to acquire basic life and work skills, such as teamwork, leadership and communication (the so-called “soft skills”). It also encourages and makes it easier for young men and women to get involved in political and trade union activities and enhances their entrepreneurial capacity.

Forum Panel 3 continued and deepened the discussion of vocational training and education for work. Section 2.3 below sets out its conclusions.
Culture, expectations, skills and domestic labour: some challenges to the social inclusion of young men and women in Latin America and the Caribbean

“It would be worthwhile to train security forces, educators, and leaders in “youth cultures” ... I think it would help them to realize that having a tattoo does not mean one is a delinquent and that using a mobile phone at school does not threaten public administration but, on the contrary, offers an opportunity to use a technological tool for communication.”

Alejo Ramírez

“We live in societies that are moving ahead at different speeds, where multiple groups live side-by-side and where youth are bombarded by endless and contradictory messages. The mechanisms of symbolic inclusion are out of sync with the actual possibilities for inclusion. Their very access to so much information technology makes many young people pursue ideals they will have no way of paying for in the end.”

José Carrera

“Many entrepreneurs tell us: ‘I know my business, I know how to train a young person to make my product. But what I do not know is how to make him or her arrive on time, communicate better or work as part of a team.’ We have learned that those skills can be taught through sports; this is interesting because sports are attractive to young people, who also realize that they can practice sports successfully.”

Fabián Andrés Koss
Inclusive youth employment calls for a major leap in educational quality—particularly of that education to which the highest risk and most vulnerable sectors have and could have access. Education, together with infrastructure, offers an answer to Latin America and the Caribbean’s low level of productivity and exclusion. It is necessary for the State, in coordination with the private sector, to incentivize programmes of youth inclusion in employment that will facilitate their access to their first jobs. Thought must be given to programmes to equip young people with the necessary skills to obtain decent work, thus guaranteeing inclusion that is not only symbolic, but real. And lastly, these policies must be grounded in both equal opportunities (for access to programmes and employment) and also equal competencies, by facilitating access to information and communication technologies from the very beginning of the training period.

This points to the need to increase public investment in youth policies and to make them, like gender equality, a crosscutting element of ministerial initiatives. As a result, it would be possible, in the medium term, to move
beyond today’s small programmes and limited assistance arranged through windows at different government levels or the limited impact of ministries or agencies specifically created for youth and endowed with overly low budgets and insufficient human resources.
2. ELEMENTS FOR ACTION

There are no universal and tested recipes for ensuring inclusive development, democratic governance and social justice. The Latin American and Caribbean countries’ margin for manoeuvre within the global crisis will depend upon factors like the economies’ external balance, international reserves, fiscal space and capacity to manage monetary policy in order to encourage saving, together with their foreign trade structure and exposure to certain markets. The performance of the educational system, of the social programmes and of the social protection measures will also be instrumental. In short, the region’s future will be shaped by government policy decisions and the business decisions of enterprises, the trade unions’ capacity for bargaining and for dialogue and the mobilization of the social actors and the citizens themselves, particularly the young people.

Some proposals for moving ahead in these areas were identified from the presentations and discussions. They are outlined below, grouped into four major areas of action:

- international and inter-institutional coordination for developing a joint agenda and sharing experiences in all spheres of decent work;
- adoption of employment and social protection as public policy goals and strategies;
- strengthening of the virtuous circle of education, employment and development; and
- sustainable enterprises and respect for fundamental rights at work, with emphasis on freedom of association and collective bargaining.
2.1 INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION

One essential line of work emphasized by all representatives of international organizations present at the Forum is international coordination at all levels on key issues of employment, protection and youth.

First, it is necessary to fully incorporate the issues discussed into the political agendas at the highest level. In this case, the ILO’s participation in G20 meetings offers an excellent opportunity, which is enhanced in the case of meetings of labour ministers and of the consultative groups of employers’ and workers’ organizations of those countries.

The United Nations social protection floor initiative, co-led by the International Labour Organization and the World Health Organization, must be strengthened and developed further. Important advances have been made in this area that several of the region’s countries could begin to give expression to, based on the report “Social Protection Floor for an Equitable and Inclusive Globalization,” prepared by a high-level panel under the chairmanship of Michelle Bachelet.

Forum participants enthusiastically espoused the idea put forward by the ILO of moving ahead with the development of a platform for sharing experiences and discussing policies regarding youth employment and, in general, decent work for youth. In this connection, the need was voiced to combine efforts that are underway in institutions represented at the Forum, in the spheres of both statistical data (in coordination with ECLAC) and knowledge sharing (with active programmes being implemented in the IDB, IYO or CAF, for example). One possibility that was mentioned in the course of the discussion was that of setting up a hemispheric programme on the subject, involving both the ILO and the OAS.
Insofar as vocational training is concerned, the Forum called for continuation of the effort at inter-regional coordination by the Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training (ILO/CINTERFOR), with the active participation of workers’ and employers’ organizations. Section 2.3 of this Report includes more of the participants’ thoughts about the development of training systems in individual countries.

The ILO in the G20

In 2009, the ILO adopted the Global Jobs Pact, which was well-received by the leaders of the G20 at the Summit held that same year in Pittsburgh. Since then, the ILO has worked with the OECD on the preparation of papers that are presented at G20 Summits. In 2010, it drew up a vocational training strategy for all of the countries in the group with the collaboration of other international institutions and of workers’ and employers’ organizations, which was then presented at the Toronto Summit.

The ILO has been insisting that employment and social protection be placed at the core of the countries’ political and economic decisions. It has accordingly been working with other international agencies to make the use of employment indicators part of the Group’s peer review process, which enables countries to measure their economic growth outcomes in order to see how they are progressing. The ILO also participates in the periodic meetings of the Ministers of Labour and Employment of the G20 countries, as well as of employers’ (Business 20) and of workers’ organizations (Labour 20), which also contribute to the debates within this Group.
2.2 EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL PROTECTION AS PUBLIC POLICY GOALS

Decent work, in a globalized and interdependent economy, requires the existence of an appropriate regulatory and policy framework. This must combine social protection measures with those for employment promotion, in a context of dialogue and respect for fundamental rights at work in both the national and international spheres. The response of the Latin American and Caribbean countries to the 2008-2009 crisis has shown that the measures most closely tied in with the concept of decent work (wage policies, extension of social protection, employment promotion, social dialogue, etc.) can be made a part of poverty and inequality reduction strategies.

The point is to adopt employment and social protection as an explicit economic and social policy goal, considering the specific needs of the population, particularly the vulnerable groups. Protection and promotion cannot be separate objectives: protection policies should be designed to include incentives for the employment of all adult family members and to enhance their employability through training. Economic and employment promotion policies, for their part, should place emphasis not only on the number of jobs, but also on their quality. They should favour sectors that are able to develop sustainable virtuous circles of growth with employment. In all cases, it is essential for the policies to be designed, executed and assessed with the active involvement of both employers and workers.

At the same time, economic conditions and technological change in recent decades have made it necessary not to rely exclusively on labour markets as a mechanism for social inclusion. Governments should do their utmost to make decent work the gateway to social protection. Even so, a realistic and effectively inclusive policy should supplement these efforts by reinforcing the right to receive sufficient monetary income, health, and pensions and through other social policies not dependent upon contributions for their financing. This
means that sufficient tax resources must be made available for their long-term financing and sustainability.

In order to ensure that social and economic policies, including employment and protection policies, produce the desired results in terms of reducing poverty and inequality, two complementary strategies must be applied: social dialogue and anti-discrimination.

- Open and productive **social dialogue** between the State and workers’ and employers’ organizations is essential to ensure that the concerns and viewpoints of actors in the real economy are incorporated into public policy design and execution. When all is said and done, these policies have a direct impact on workers’ quality of life and on enterprise sustainability, the source of employment and development. As a result, it is necessary to encourage and reward the opening up of spaces for dialogue at all levels—from the economic and social consultative councils to negotiation at the enterprise level. Concerted positions and the settlement of differences through dialogue are conducive to social peace and create a climate favourable to enterprise and trade union development.

- In the second place, explicit action must be taken to fight **discrimination** against women, indigenous populations and people of African descent in public policies and in social and private sector strategies. In addition to affirmative action and policies to promote the rights of these groups, appropriate legislation is needed, together with strict implementation of existing regulations. It is necessary for government branches, civil society organizations, trade unions and entrepreneurs’ associations to wage active campaigns to change discriminatory patterns of behaviour that are deeply rooted in some cultural models.
The Forum focused its discussions on the situation of youth. It was emphasized that this is a heterogeneous group, with varied experiences and differentiated needs, depending upon individual characteristics (age, sex, origin, place of residence, socio-economic environment, level of education and training). As in the case of the general population, this means combining policies for employment growth with programmes designed to overcome specific obstacles that many young people encounter in the labour market. The best way for young men and women to break into the labour market continues to be via a good basic education, vocational training and initial work experience. National programmes and policies that give enterprises incentives to hire young people, promote youth entrepreneurial initiative and facilitate access to financing and to other active measures targeting the labour market, can also help countries improve the decent work prospects of their youth.

2.3 THE VIRTUOUS CIRCLE OF EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

“Our stimulus policies should target not only infrastructure works, which we obviously need to consolidate our competitiveness, but also (...) the education and vocational training of human capital, which needs to become increasingly skilled. (...) While Peru’s economic growth has been impressive, it has paradoxically been accompanied by chronic exclusion. What we propose to do at this stage is to ensure that our growth benefits everyone, and not just a chosen few. We want to put an end to the “cheap cholo” policy and to the belief that the worse the working conditions, the more competitive our countries will be. We affirm precisely the contrary: that true competitiveness depends upon the people’s capacity.”

Rafael Roncagliolo
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Peru
The paragraph heading this section, taken from the address of the Foreign Minister of Peru at the opening session of the Forum, summarizes the key message expressed, with varying nuances, in the comments and presentations, particularly of Panel 3 (“Education, competitiveness and decent work”). The moderator was Raymond Torres, Director of the International Institute for Labour Studies, and the panelists were Jorge Castro León, Secretary of the National Council and National Director of the National Industrial Training Service of Peru (SENATI); Franklin Chang Díaz, former astronaut and Director of Ad Astra Rocket Company, an aerospace technology enterprise; and Miguel Ángel Malo, Professor at the University of Salamanca, Spain.

The change in technological patterns over the past two decades has altered conditions in the production process. The scope and consequences of these alterations must be understood, if the training of human resources is to be brought into line with the new demands. An example of this can be found in the area of aerospace technology. Here, education, although not a panacea, is called upon to play a key role. As a result, it requires special attention and the
development of appropriate public policies. Given the speed of technological change, education must be accompanied by plans for vocational and continuous refresher training. This ongoing training enables people to keep their skills up-to-date in the face of changing technology and skills requirements at work.

Outer Space offers opportunities for entrepreneurial and youth development

Outer space has become a workplace and a place of business (...), where sophistication has reached such an extreme that human beings perform tasks that would earlier have been considered science fiction (...). The space station, a 400 metric ton structure that is revolving around the earth at 7 kilometers a second and where people of all nationalities live together, is the most complex construction ever built by man (...). Global spatial activity is tremendous and we, as Latin Americans, want to become more involved. A total of 276 billion dollars a year is spent on spatial business and only one-third of this comes from government budgets. The rest is produced by spatial trade, infrastructure and services. (...) An enormous opportunity has opened up for the region’s private sector and workers.

Franklin Chang Díaz

The problem of education and technical training in Latin America and the Caribbean is not so much a matter of quantity --although a margin exists for expanding coverage, particularly in compulsory post-secondary education and in higher education, including university education--, but of quality and relevance. In this connection, more resources need to be invested in education
and the proper management of educational systems must be ensured, with emphasis on the strategies needed to upgrade teaching skills.

A much larger investment is needed in research, development and innovation (R+D+I) in both the public and private sectors, in universities and enterprises. Although, at the regional level, this investment has increased heavily over the past decade in absolute terms, it still lags far behind the rate in developed countries or in the fastest growing emerging economies, which can amount to as much as 2% to 3% of GDP. R+D+I not only boosts competitiveness in the state-of-the-art sectors, but also produces knowledge and tools that directly affect the quality of education in those fields. In order to be able to assimilate this scientifically-based technological know-how, however, people must have sufficient grounding, acquired through a basic education, to understand this knowledge. The concept of “education for work” must be present from the very first years of schooling.

Inequality of access, particularly at the university level, is another core element to be considered in defining policies to make education a mechanism for social mobility. Of every 27 young people at the upper income levels who complete five years of university study, only one at the other end of the income scale is able to do so. These differences result in a huge income gap when people enter the labour market.

A virtuous circle of education, employment and development will only be possible if public policies are in place. These must be backed by sufficient investment (in both education and in R+D+I) to promote equal opportunities for access to all levels of education. This investment must also guarantee, from the very earliest stages, the acquisition of the skills needed for successful insertion into the world of work.
The following points detail some of the concrete recommendations for action in this field that were put forward during the Forum.

- Avoidance of skills shortages in high-growth sectors requires closer coordination between potential employers and suppliers of education and training, more training opportunities on the part of the public sector and encouragement of on-the-job training. There is a glaring shortage of highly skilled labour in some production sectors in several of the region’s countries that could hold back economic growth and the attraction of new investment.

- The development and strengthening of dual systems (like those in Germany and in many other countries), where vocational training is based on a strong interaction between educational systems and enterprises, offers a solution of the kind suggested in the previous point. People find that the best way to do a good job in their youth is by experimenting during their education and training. In order for students to have an opportunity to put those skills into practice, local, city or regional entrepreneurs must be involved.

- Technical – vocational training programmes must be organized in accordance with the jobs required by the economy. Their necessarily modular structure will permit more rapid departures and more complete training, in terms of the region’s production structure (with a medium- and long-term approach).
Training should involve, at all levels of education, both the transmission and the acquisition of technical knowledge --both theory and practice-- and the development of “soft” skills that will facilitate continuous learning, teamwork, leadership and creativity in the search for solutions.

Education for work: the importance of “soft” skills

“What is the educational aim of education for work? To develop specific expertise and skills for specific purposes. That is its main difference from traditional education, (whose) aim is to teach ideas and concepts and to memorize data. That is not what we mean when we talk about education for work: the educational aim here is to develop specific capacities (…) through assimilation of all of the knowledge, all of the skills, all of the values and all of the attitudes needed to develop that capacity.”

Jorge Castro León

“What are the necessary qualifications for getting a good job? The main one is “expert thinking,”--being able to resolve new problems for which there is no preset solution routine. Also important are communication and the capacity to negotiate, to adjust to the situation and for teamwork. Our universities and secondary schools are not doing a good job of transmitting those skills. Even if we give all children computers, unless we teach them the criteria for managing all of the information available, we will not help them to get good jobs.”

Miguel Angel Malo
2.4 ENTERPRISES AND LABOUR RIGHTS: AN INDIVISIBLE UNION

Representatives of employers’ and workers’ organizations commented on each of the presentations made during the two-day Forum. In their comments and their contributions to the discussions, both employers and workers insisted on two basic requirements for ensuring the creation of decent and productive jobs, particularly for young people, and democratic governance: enterprise sustainability and respect for fundamental rights at work, particularly freedom of association and collective bargaining.

Both are core issues on the ILO agenda for the region and worldwide. In fact, these two issues --together with the strengthening of labour administration-- constituted the key demands of the Organization’s constituents at the 2010 ILO American Regional Meeting in Santiago, Chile.
The importance of sustainable enterprises cannot be downplayed in this context, particularly the need for a favourable climate in which they can be founded, grow and play their essential role in creating wealth, jobs and, in the end, economic development.

Sustainable enterprises depend upon a series of elements, some of them inherent to the very enterprise’s management, its capacity for innovation, technology, competitiveness and --quite obviously-- the effort it makes to create environmentally-friendly jobs that are decent and productive. They also depend largely, however, on decisions that are made not by the enterprise itself, but by governments and society as a whole. In the first place, in order to ensure competitiveness, it is essential to have a physical and social infrastructure in place, including an appropriate educational and training system. Secondly, economic and macroeconomic stability are needed in the fiscal, budgetary, exchange and monetary areas. And last, there must be a stable, foreseeable and transparent institutional environment conducive to entrepreneurship that favours savings from investment, thereby spurring loyal competition. Economic and social development and job creation are possible only through the stable union of “decent work – sustainable enterprise.”

In addition, social inclusion, anti-poverty and inequality reduction policies will be more feasible and exert a greater impact, as key elements for ensuring democratic governance, in a general context of respect for workers’ rights and the existence of social dialogue. Enterprise sustainability, furthermore, is closely tied in with the widespread exercise of labour rights, particularly freedom of association.

Freedom of association and collective bargaining are fundamental principles and rights that help improve the working and living conditions of the working population. This improvement results in greater development and the creation of more sustainable growth patterns that are essential, if equitable resource
distribution and more equal access to public goods are to exist. This applies to the adult population and, particularly, to young people.

Here, an area that calls for further effort in the region is encouraging the association of young men and women in trade unions, considering the changing relationship between youth and employment (seasonal nature, more frequent job changes, etc.).

**Pending items on the agenda**

“*Much still remains to be done on the region’s agenda of reforms, in order to guarantee more efficient bases for economic competitiveness, with special emphasis on education, legal security and infrastructure. It is only by cooperating actively with the private sector, eliminating regulations that hinder the development of sustainable enterprises and providing answers to the needs of entrepreneurs in deciding whether or not to employ that governments will be able to resolve social and economic problems that are still deeply entrenched in the region.*”

Dagoberto Lima Godoy

“*Despite the recent institutional reforms enacted by many countries in the region and their renewed emphasis on social inclusion, we continue to see a decent work deficit. A highly important issue for us, from the viewpoint of the trade unions, is the need for collective bargaining to rest on freedom of association. Trade union membership permits workers to negotiate differentiated working and living conditions, allowing them to leave behind precarious jobs and the informal economy --today so widespread in our countries.*”

Amanda Villatoro
The current international crisis and the situation of youth threaten democratic governance. The Euro zone crisis has already produced global repercussions that will doubtlessly soon be felt in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is vitally important for the South American countries to pay careful attention to the Chinese economy, because of their important trading relations with that country. For Central America and the Caribbean, the evolution of the United States economy will hold the key to the future. Coordinated implementation of employment and social protection policies will vary in each country, according to its characteristics and room for manoeuvre.

The ILO reiterated its commitment to accompany the region’s countries and the workers’ and employers’ organizations in that search, by facilitating the sharing of information about successful policies. The starting point will be the review of the policies and measures implemented in facing up to the crisis of 2008 and the assessment of the fiscal space available to each country for the adoption of specific additional or complementary programmes.

It is a well-known fact that economic growth, while necessary, is not sufficient in itself to combat inequality and poverty. An array of public policies must be developed to reinforce equality and effectively fight discrimination. These must be implemented by States that are strong and, above all, responsive, and whose growth strategies for social inclusion target decent work.
Development policies for inclusive production should be supplemented by broad social protection programmes that create a basic universal floor. Higher taxation levels must be securely in place to finance these policies -- particularly their direct financing-- and to ensure that they have an impact on income redistribution.

It is also necessary to build up the role of sustainable enterprises in the creation of highly productive, quality jobs on which the competitiveness of national economies as part of the global economy can rest. At the same time, respect for fundamental principles and rights at work helps to give shape to a culture of social dialogue that, as the Global Jobs Pact of 2009 claims, is particularly useful during crises. Further progress is also needed in promoting freedom of association and collective bargaining, fundamental rights and principles at work that contribute to democratic governance.

More specifically, the Forum addressed an issue that requires the immediate attention of the ILO and its constituents: the promotion of decent work for young people.

Youth is demanding new and better opportunities. The ILO should continue promoting decent work for young people by focusing particularly on education and vocational training, as well as on the development and implementation of the policies that are needed to give young people access to decent jobs and to enable them to bring their entrepreneurial initiatives to fruition.

This has been and continues to be an important issue for discussion in the G20, where it will be possible to establish common priorities and strategies for promoting youth employment, including the follow-up to the vocational training strategy prepared in 2010.
Within the region, national and subregional tripartite consultations will be continued, with a view toward establishing a decent work for youth platform that will include a knowledge base and a survey of good practices and applied policies, covering an analysis of existing regulations and patterns of school-to-work transition, as well.

Below is a list of some specific matters on which the ILO could provide technical assistance:

- Adjustment of public employment services for young people.
- Digital training programmes, considering that large numbers of young people, particularly in rural areas and belonging to certain less favoured groups, are unable to handle the new digital technologies that are useful not only as a means of communication, but also as working and entrepreneurial tools.
- With regard to the care economy, the development and implementation of preventive, mitigating and compensatory policies for young mothers who suffer exclusion because they are school dropouts or left their jobs.
- Promotion of an entrepreneurial culture and youth entrepreneurship by providing technical assistance, training and financial support programmes.
- Inclusion of young people in social dialogue strategies that provide for the development of specific tripartite mechanisms for youth.
- Support for on-the-job training programmes by facilitating traineeships and practice at the workplace and in sustainable enterprises.
- Continuous development and reinforcement of educational and training systems that cover the requirements of the world of work and include strategies in which the enterprise is directly involved (such as updating knowledge while working, practice, etc). Cognitive skills, group interaction skills and problem solving skills should be used to develop transversal competencies, together with critical capacity and complex thinking.
Systems should also be developed to enable teachers to keep their teaching knowledge and techniques up to date at all times.

- Adoption of innovative financing methods that will give young people access to more training opportunities, regardless of their income level.
- Development of an entrepreneurial culture in which entrepreneurship skills are promoted as a way to boost production activities that create jobs and income for the young.
- Promotion of strategies to favor youth participation in trade union and association activities for young people.

The ILO should work to support its national constituents in all of these areas, jointly with other United Nations specialized agencies, international financial institutions and multilateral organizations. These joint efforts should result in multiagency initiatives that are better endowed with financial resources and have a greater capacity to produce a substantive impact that can be sustained in the long term in countries of the region, resulting in decent and productive jobs for their populations.
PARTICIPANTES EN EL FORO

**Argentine Republic**

**Federico LUDUEÑA**
Coordinator of the “Young People with More and Better Work” programme, Secretariat of Employment – Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security

**Anahi del Valle MEDINA**
Representative - General Confederation of Labour

**Victorio PAULÓN**
Secretary for International Relations – Argentine Workers Union

**Matías VÁZQUEZ**
Representative - Argentine Industrial Union

**Barbados**

**Leroy TROTMAN**
General Secretary - Barbados Workers’ Union

**Anthony WALCOTT**
Executive Director - Barbados Employers’ Confederation

**Plurinational State of Bolivia**

**Tiburcio AGUILAR**
Vice-Minister for Employment, Civil Service and Cooperatives - Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security

**Guido LANDA**
Director of Programmes and Projects - Bolivian Confederation of Private Entrepreneurs
Youth in the new era of social justice
Thoughts on the presentations and discussions at the International Forum on “Employment, Youth and Democratic Governance”

Federative Republic of Brazil
Zilmara ALENCAR
Labour Relations Secretariat – Ministry of Labour and Employment
Ana DE ALENCASTRO
Coordinator, Youth Entrepreneurship Studies – Ministry of Labour and Employment
Ortelio PALACIO
Advisor on International Matters. Fuerza Sindical (Trade Union Force)
Rosana SOUSA
National Youth Secretariat - Sole Centre for the Workers
Nilton SOUZA DA SILVA
Deputy Worker Member – Governing Body of the ILO

Republic of Chile
Bruno BARANDA
Undersecretary of Labour – Ministry of Labour and Social Security

Republic of Colombia
Rosa Elena FLEREZ
Alternate Worker Member – Governing Body of the ILO
Gloria GAVIRIA
Head, Office of Cooperation and International Affairs – Ministry of Social Protection
Octavio RUBIO
National Organizer of the Youth Department - General Confederation of Labour

Republic of Costa Rica
Rodrigo AGUILAR
Chairman - Rerum Novarum Confederation of Workers
Andrés ROMERO
Advisor to the Minister’s Cabinet – Ministry of Labour and Social Security
Shirley SABORÍO
Executive Director – Costa Rican Union of Chambers and Associations of Private Companies

Dominican Republic
Jaime GONZÁLEZ
President – Employers’ Confederation of the Dominican Republic
José Luis MATOS
Vice-Minister of Labour – Ministry of Labour
Rómulo VALLEJO
Youth Secretary - Autonomous Class-Based Trade Union Confederation

Republic of Ecuador
Jaime ARCINIEGA
Chairman - Confederation of Ecuadorian Workers
Emilia RIBADENEIRA
Director, Attention to Priority Groups – Ministry of Labour Relations
Manuel TERÁN
Alternate Employer Member – Governing Body of the ILO
Pablo ZAMBRANO
Technical Secretary – National Federation of Chambers of Industry of Ecuador

Republic of El Salvador
Julia ESCOBAR
Economic and Social Affairs Bureau - National Association of Private Enterprises
Oscar MORALES
Executive Director – Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Youth in the new era of social justice
Thoughts on the presentations and discussions at the International Forum on “Employment, Youth and Democratic Governance”

Republic of Guatemala
Edy BOTEÓ
Executive Director – Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial and Financial Associations

Mario ILLESCAS
Minister of Labour and Social Security – Ministry of Labour and Social Security

José PINZÓN
Secretary General – General Union of Guatemalan Workers

Republic of Guyana
Samuel GOOLSARRAN
Consultant Adviser - The Consultative Association of Guyanese Industry Ltd.

Republic of Honduras
Eva CALLEJAS
Manager for Projects and Agreements – Honduran Council of Private Enterprise

Héctor ESCOTO
Secretary General – Unitary Confederation of Honduran Workers

Carlos MONTES
Deputy Secretary of State – State Secretariat of Labour and Social Security

Laura RUIZ
Assistent to the Office of the President - Honduran Council of Private Enterprise

Santiago RUIZ
President – Honduran Council of Private Enterprise

Armando URTECHO
Deputy Employer Member – Governing Body of the ILO.

Honduran Council of Private Enterprise
Jamaica
Marcia BOLT
Manager, Special Intervention Projects - Ministry of Labour and Social Security
Yvonne DAVIS
Senior Manager-Workplace Solutions - Jamaica Employers Federation

United Mexican States
Andrik FLORES-HALLER
Director for Foreign Trade – Confederation of Industrial Chambers of the United Mexican States
Jorge HERBERT
National Vice-Chairman of the Commission for Young Entrepreneurs – Employers Confederation of the Mexican Republic
Francisco RUIZ
Chairman of the Commission for Young Entrepreneurs - Employers Confederation of the Mexican Republic
Eduardo VÁZQUEZ
Secretary for Institutional Relations - Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Peasants

Republic of Nicaragua
Freddy BLANDÓN
Representative - Superior Council of Private Enterprise
Odel GONZÁLEZ
Director General of Employment Policies and Wages – Ministry of Labour

Republic of Panama
Alma CORTES
Minister of Labour and Labour Development – Ministry of Labour and Labour Development
Youth in the new era of social justice
Thoughts on the presentations and discussions at the International Forum on “Employment, Youth and Democratic Governance”

Iván GANTES
Director of International Affairs – Ministry of Labour and Labour Development

Aurelio LINERO
Alternate Employer Member – Governing Body of the ILO

Víctor TORRES
Secretary General - Convergencia Sindical (Trade Union Convergence)

Luisa TUROLLA
Representative - National Council of Private Enterprise

Republic of Paraguay
Jorge MORENO
Federation of Production, Industry and Trade

Pedro PARRA
Alternate Worker Member – Governing Body of the ILO

Miguel ZAYAS
Secretary General – National Paraguayan Workers’ Centre

Republic of Peru
Julio César BARRENECHEA
Chairman, Committee on Labour Matters - National Confederation of Private Entrepreneurial Institutions

José Rueda FERNÁNDEZ
Legal and Legislative Advisor - National Confederation of Private Entrepreneurial Institutions

Zuly GRIMALDO
Representative – Trade Union Centre of Peruvian Workers

Katia HURTADO – Youth Representative
Trade Union Centre of Peruvian Workers

José VILLENA
Minister of Labour and Employment Promotion
Republic of Suriname

Steven RELYVELD
The Permanent Secretary of Labour, Technological Development and Environment - Ministry of Labour, Technological Development and Environment
Ferdinand WELZIJN
President - Suriname Trade and Industry Association

Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Linda BESSON
Executive Director - The Employers’ Consultative Association of Trinidad and Tobago
John JAGLAL
Ag. President General - All Trinidad General Workers Union, Rienzi Complex
Joy PERSAD-MYERS
Deputy Permanent Secretary - Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development

Eastern Republic of Uruguay

Fernando BERASAIN
Advisor to the Secretariat of State – Ministry of Labour and Social Security
Eduardo BRENTA
Minister of Labour and Social Security
Marcela GONZÁLEZ
Representative of the Economic Team Cuesta Duarte Institute – Interunion Workers’ Plenary National Workers’ Convención
Juan MAILHOS
Alternate Employer Member - Governing Body of the ILO
National Chamber of Commerce and Services of Uruguay
Gabriela RODRÍGUEZ
Coordinator of the Reinforcement Programme of the National Employment Bureau – Ministry of Labour and Social Security

Eduardo PEREYRA
National Director of Employment – Ministry of Labour and Social Security

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Pablo AURE
Federation of Chambers and Associations of Commerce and Production of Venezuela

Jorge BOTTI
President – Federation of Chambers and Associations of Commerce and Production of Venezuela

Ricardo CUSANNO
Treasurer – Federation of Chambers and Associations of Commerce and Production of Venezuela

Albis MUÑOZ
Alternate Employer Member – Governing Body of the ILO

Cristina ORTEGA
President – Venezuelan Workers’ Confederation in Apure State

Martín VILLARROEL
Director General of Employment – Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Welfare

Speakers and Panelists

Eduardo BRENTA
Minister of Labour and Social Security – Eastern Republic of Uruguay

José CARRERA
Corporate Vice President of Social and Environmental Development – Andean Development Corporation
Jorge CASTRO LEÓN  
Secretary of the National Council and National Director of the National Industrial Training Service, Peru  

Luis Miguel CASTILLA  
Minister of Economy and Finance of Peru  

Franklin CHANG DÍAZ  
President of Estrategia Siglo XXI - Director of Ad Astra Rocket Company  

Nicolás EYZAGUIRRE  
Director, Western Hemisphere Department International Monetary Fund  

José Miguel INSULZA  
Secretary General – Organization of American States  

Fabián Andrés KOSS  
Youth Development Coordinator – Office of External Relations of the Inter-American Development Bank  

Dagoberto LIMA GODOY  
Titular Employer Member – Governing Body of the ILO  

Miguel Angel MALO  
Professor– Department of Economics and Economic History, University of Salamanca, Spain  

Antonio PRADO  
Deputy Executive Secretary – Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean  

Alejo RAMÍREZ  
Secretary General – Ibero-American Youth Organization  

Rafael RONCAGLIOLO  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Peru  

Arturo VALENZUELA  
Professor of Government and Director of the Center for Latin American Studies, Georgetown University, United States  

Amanda VILLATORO  
Secretariat for Trade Union Policy and Education – Trade Union Confederation of the Americas
María ARTETA
Assistant Director – Decent Work Team, ILO Country Offices for the Andean Countries
Carmen BENITEZ
Regional Specialist in Workers’ Education and Workers’ Activities
Luis CORDOVA
Regional Specialist in Communication
Miguel DEL CID
Director, Labour Analysis and Information System for Latin America and the Caribbean - ILO Panama
María Angélica DUCCI
Chief of Cabinet of the ILO Director-General, Geneva
Rafael GIJON
Bureau for Employers’ Activities - ILO Geneva
Gerardina GONZALEZ MARROQUIN
Deputy Director of the ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean
Luis GONZALEZ
Regional Specialist in Employers’ Activities
Florencio GUDIÑO
Chief, Regional Programming Services
Jorge ILLINGWORTH
Specialist in Employers’ Activities – Decent Work Team, ILO Country Office for the Andean Countries
Virgilio LEVAGGI
Director, Decent Work Team and ILO Country Office for Central America
Carmen MORENO
Director, Decent Work Team, ILO Country Office for the Andean Countries
Martha PACHECO
Director, ILO/CINTERFOR
Alvaro RAMIREZ
Decent Work Team and ILO Country Office for Central America

Eduardo RODRIGUEZ
Specialist in Workers’ Activities – Decent Work Team – ILO Country Office for the Andean Countries

Ana Teresa ROMERO
Director, Decent Work Team, ILO Office for the Caribbean

Reynold SIMONS
Employment Specialist – Decent Work Team, ILO Office for the Caribbean

Elizabeth TINOCO
Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean

Raymond TORRES
Director - International Institute for Labour Studies -ILO Geneva

Fernando VARGAS
ILO/CINTERFOR