DRAFT DECLARATION OF BRIDGETOWN 2017
“BUILDING ON OUR ACHIEVEMENTS AND ADVANCING TOWARDS SOCIAL JUSTICE, DECENT WORK AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE AMERICAS”

(Presented by the delegation of Barbados)

1. We the Ministers and Heads of Delegations participating in the XX Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour (XX-IACML) of the Organization of American States (OAS) meeting in the City of Bridgetown, Barbados on December 7 and 8, 2017 have gathered here to discuss and advance strategies, approaches and programmes to consolidate and build on our achievements, as well as advance towards social justice, decent work and sustainable development in the Americas.

2. We reaffirm our strong commitment to the principles of Inter-American solidarity and cooperation enshrined in the Charter of the OAS as we endorse and promote the Inter-American Democratic Charter and the Social Charter of the Americas. We echo the contents of these instruments which recognize that social justice, equity and the generation of decent work are essential to democracy.

3. We underscore our commitment to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, accepting that the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions is indispensable in efforts toward sustainable development; and recognize the role of Ministries of Labour in advancing that Agenda particularly goal 8 on promoting sustained, inclusive economic growth with full and productive employment and decent work for all.

4. We also recognize the vital role our respective Ministries of Labour play in promoting economic and social policies that place full, productive employment and decent work at
the center of their objectives. We encourage our respective Ministries throughout the hemisphere to enhance cooperation and coordination amongst labour authorities and institutions and amongst our counterparts in finance, education, health and trade in promoting development that is sustainable and inclusive.

5. Aware that Article 33 of the Social Charter of the Americas asserts that inter-American cooperation is a common and shared responsibility in the framework of democratic principles of the Inter-American system, we recognize that technical assistance and horizontal cooperation contribute to institutional strengthening and the attainment of best practice in matters of labour and employment. As such, we value highly and renew our commitment to, and support for the work of the Inter-American Network for Labour Administration (RIAL).

6. We reaffirm our understanding that economic development, democratic governance, decent work and social inclusion are inter-dependent and mutually reinforcing. Further, we recognize that strategies, approaches, policies and programmes advanced in matters related to labour and employment are key in any process of advancement towards integral development. Consequently we, the Ministers of Labour and Heads of Delegations gathered here adopt the following recommendations to serve as a frame of reference for labour and employment policies throughout the hemisphere, as we seek to build on the accomplishments made since 1963 through Inter-American solidarity, consensus building and cooperation through the processes and mechanisms of the IACML.

TOWARDS BETTER INTER-SECTORIAL COORDINATION BETWEEN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND LABOUR, CRUCIAL TO UNLEASH YOUTH POTENTIAL AND ADDRESS THE FUTURE OF WORK

7. We recognize the relationship that exists between decent work and education, and we celebrate the dialogue and cooperation that we have sustained since the XIX IACML with the Ministries of Education through the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE). We agree that our education systems must evolve to provide quality, inclusive and equitable education and training, and also better respond to the new challenges of the world of work, as well as the new demands of the productive sector.
8. We encourage integrated policies and programmes, and we will deepen inter-sectoral collaboration between Ministries of Labor, Ministries of Education, training institutions and social partners to strengthen our education and training systems, generate and preserve full and productive employment and decent work, and promote sustained, inclusive economic growth.

9. We will place special emphasis on understanding the new challenges of the world of work, in the face of the fourth industrial revolution, and to addressing and incorporating them into the design of modern and relevant curricula in education and training systems. We acknowledge the trends and developments in this digital age where traditional approaches to work are being reshaped, including the increasing possibility for workers to perform tasks from physical locations away from the traditional workplace. We recognize that these developments give rise to new challenges and we shall strive to equip our workforce, particularly our youth, with skills sets to meet the new and emerging realities of the world of work.

10. We will strengthen our technical and vocational education and training (TVET) systems, as we recognize the vital role they play in providing sustainable employment, particularly among youth, as well as in diversifying the workforce, especially in areas where there may be significant opportunity for growth and development. We call on our private sectors to engage in mutually beneficial, smart partnerships with our training institutions.

11. We believe that in an increasingly competitive environment and in the face of increasing labor mobility, there is vital need for workers to attain certification that can be recognized locally, regionally and internationally. Therefore, we will continue to strengthen our national skills certification systems, and empower workers who may have acquired their skills sets through on-the-job training with every opportunity to demonstrate their competencies at the appropriate certifying level. We will also promote more regional and international cooperation on this matter, in order to have skills certifications accepted across national borders.

12. We reaffirm our commitment to further develop modern labour market information systems that provide vital information for both policy-makers and job-seekers. We recognize that with accurate and timely information, we will be better placed to monitor labour related trends and developments occurring over multi-year timeframes and to identify, assess and implement measures
that are based on objective, factual analysis.

13. We call for a long term, multi-faceted approach to strengthen our public employment services, as we agree that modernized, well-equipped employment services resourced with appropriately trained personnel are a critical element in our labour market strategies. We will continue to promote a range of available services and will strive to ensure that the highest level of career guidance, coaching, counseling and employment services information is available to students, job seekers and other stakeholders seeking to enter or re-enter the world of work. We will ensure that information on career guidance is tailored to be more relevant to today’s modern and dynamic work environment.

14. We acknowledge and affirm our responsibility to create an enabling environment in which young persons are gainfully employed in decent work. Conscious of the “call for action” on youth unemployment adopted by member states at the International Labour Conference in 2012 and SDG goal 8, we are resolute in our commitment to take effective action in reducing youth unemployment.

MAKING THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT A REALITY: IMPLEMENTATION OF GOAL 8 OF THE SDGS; DECENT WORK, SUSTAINABLE ENTERPRISES AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE

15. We uphold our commitment, established in goal 8.5 of the 2030 Agenda, “to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men”, by 2030. Further, we recognize that these considerations are central to sustainable social and economic development and should be at the forefront in the processes of policy formulation and planning for development. As such, we propose to work for public policies that integrate labour and employment with educational, social, economic, trade and investment policies. We will encourage our governments and other relevant agencies and institutions to pay due consideration to the impact of their policy options on employment and decent work.

16. We are committed to policies that promote and facilitate the development of productive, competitive and sustainable enterprises, including micro, small and medium sized
enterprises (MSMEs) and other production units, as we recognize their contribution to employment generation, economic growth and social inclusion. We agree to work towards the creation and maintenance of an enabling environment for the establishment and growth of enterprises, and we commit to strengthen programmes aimed at the provision of technical assistance in the financial, social and environmental aspects of business.

17. We agree that policies and measures on the green economy provide opportunities to achieve social and economic objectives that facilitate the integration of employment and development with environmental sustainability. We underscore the importance of a just transition framework and commit to strengthening our efforts to pursue green economy strategies which include, as appropriate, the anticipation of impacts on employment, adequate and sustainable social protection for job losses and displacement, skills development and redevelopment, as well as social dialogue and job creation.

18. We underscore that work is a means through which human potential is realized and we recognize that human dignity is expressed in work at its fullest when the rights of workers are respected and given expression. We recommit to pursuing action in support of the ILO Decent Work Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

19. We recognize the universal principles of freedom of association and collective bargaining as fundamental to the advancement of consensus building on matters of importance in the workplace and beyond. We reaffirm our commitment to promoting and ensuring the functioning of mechanisms through which application of these principles can be guaranteed.

20. We recognize social dialogue as an important mechanism for preventing and resolving labour issues and reaching agreement among social partners at the enterprise, sectoral and national levels. We intend to foster such mechanisms for dialogue in the processes of seeking to contribute towards the building of just and equitable societies.

21. We strive to engage efforts in analysis and policy design in order to ensure the sustainability and coverage of social security systems, within our areas of responsibility and consistent with national laws and resources. We shall redouble our efforts in extending coverage to
all sectors for which particular challenges may be presented and we undertake to encourage the development of national social security systems that are built on the principles of sustainability, inclusiveness, universality, equality and transparency. We will continue our efforts on the analysis and design of mechanisms that facilitate the recognition of nominal pension contributions and pension rights across countries.

GENDER EQUALITY, ENSURING LABOUR RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

22. We commit ourselves to reinforce policies and programs that reduce the disparities that exist between men and women in the world of work, eradicate discrimination, harassment, and violence based on gender or sexual orientation, and lead to a better balance between family and work responsibilities. We will continue to work towards mainstreaming a gender perspective into employment and labor policies, as well as our Ministries’ operations and structure.

23. We recall the “Strategic Guidelines of the XV IACML for Advancing Gender Equality and Non-discrimination within a decent work framework”, presented at the XV IACML in Port of Spain in 2007, which spearheaded the work of the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL) on gender equality in the world of work, with the support of the Inter-American Commission on Women (CIM). We agree to review those guidelines and update them, as needed.

24. We are committed to strengthening our systems of labour inspection and administration, ensuring independence and professionalism in their operations, as we strive towards the effective enforcement of our national labour laws and the promotion of international labour standards. We recognize that effective observance of standards must go beyond labour inspection, therefore, we will reinforce strategies that encourage cooperation and collaboration, as well as programmes of sensitization, education and promotion.

25. We reaffirm our conviction that all migrant workers, regardless of their immigration status, should be accorded the full protection of rights and the full observance of applicable labour laws and international standards. We will continue to work towards developing programs and
strategies that protect the labor rights of migrant workers, inform them of their rights and responsibilities, and contribute to the effective management of labor migration and the prevention and elimination of human trafficking and forced labor. We will undertake to collaborate with counterpart agencies at the national and hemispheric levels, as well as with workers’ and employers’ organizations and civil society, recognizing the cross-cutting dimensions of this phenomenon.

26. We will continue to take and support actions and measures to fulfill our governments’ international commitment, established in goal 8.7 of 2030 Agenda, to end child labour in all its forms by 2025. We are firm in our conviction that all children should have access to quality education as the foundation of their development.

27. We will continue to work towards having healthier and safer workplaces, as well as to reduce and prevent occupational injuries and illnesses. We will collaborate with employers and workers to develop strategies that promote a culture of risk prevention in the workplace and to continuously improve occupational health and safety standards and practices. We will work to strengthen our inspection systems, engage in multi-sectoral and inter-agency collaboration and adopt integrated approaches to occupational health and safety that include environmental, health and other public policies.

28. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthen strategies that will reduce the incidence of HIV and AIDS, substance abuse and addiction and the growing impact of chronic non-communicable diseases such as cancer, diabetes, hypertension and mental health disorders on workers and the workplace. We recognize the important role workplaces can play in this regard through workplace wellness programmes. We agree to promote such approaches as we work for the wellbeing of the workforce.

29. We will redouble efforts to develop and implement policies and programmes for greater inclusion of rural populations in labour market activities and their economic advancement, in collaboration with relevant institutions. We recognize that those involved in the production of traditional and indigenous products and services hold much potential to contribute to meeting the objectives of integral development. We will provide special attention and support to these aspects and areas of production.
30. We are committed to the promotion of policies, programmes and approaches that contribute to facilitate the transition from the informal to formal economy, recognizing that the informal economy is heterogeneous and must be addresses with a multifaceted approach. Further, we highlight the continuing emergence of various forms of precarious work arrangements that increasingly place workers outside wage/work contract arrangements.

THEREFORE, WE RESOLVE:

1. To implement a Plan of Action based on this Declaration and on the work of the XIX Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor (IACML) and commit to allocating such resources as may be required:

2. To set up two working groups to continue to pursue activities and actions that will contribute to the objectives and commitments of this Declaration, as follows:

   i. Working Group 1: Integrated public policies for productive employment and decent work with social inclusion.

   ii. Working Group 2: Institutional strengthening to protect workers’ and employers’ rights and promote cooperation.

3. To renew our commitment to, and support for the work of the Inter-American Network for Labour Administration (RIAL).

4. To acknowledge and express gratitude for the contributions made by the following international organizations that continuously work with the IACML: the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Inter-American Conference on Social Security (CISS), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE), and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Accordingly, we call for continued coordination,
support, and regional dialogue with those institutions.

5. To recognize the importance of the active participation, contributions, inputs, and support for the advancement of the IACML on the part of workers’ and employers’ organizations through the Trade Union Technical Advisory Council (COSATE) and the Business Technical Advisory Committee on Labor Matters (CEATAL). Therefore, we reiterate our commitment to continue to work closely with those organizations.

6. To thank and commend the Government of Mexico for its leadership and commitment in advancing inter-American dialogue on labor and employment as Chair of the XIX IACML, and also the Governments of Brazil, Chile, Panama, Paraguay, Canada, and Costa Rica, which led the working groups of the XIX IACML.

7. To thank the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States, as the technical secretariat of the IACML, for its guidance and support in this important hemispheric process of political dialogue and consensus-building, as well as for its coordination of the RIAL.

8. To organize the XXI IACML in . . . . . . . . . . . . in 20 . . .