

FORTY-SIXTH REGULAR SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE OAS

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
June 13 to 15, 2016

WORKERS' DECLARATION

1. The Trade Union movement in the Americas, represented by its continental organization, the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA) and the Trade Union Technical Advisory Council (COSATE), gather in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic on June 12th with the goal of consolidating ideas and recommendations on the **“INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE AMERICAS”**, to be presented to the authorities of the Member States of the Organization of American States during the General Assembly on June 13, 14 and 15th.
2. Before presenting our vision on the topic, we consider it necessary to reflect on the complex political, economic and social moment that our continent is facing. Given its relevance, we will be using the analysis from the 3rd TUCA Congress, held in April in Sao Paulo, Brazil.
3. We are still under the effects of one of the major economic crises of developed capitalism that broke out in 2008. The impact of the crisis was felt immediately and sharply in the negative GDP growth rates of Latin American countries. However, a rapid recovery encouraged the idea that there was a “disconnect” between the central countries and peripheral emerging ones. This illusion vanished in 2012-2013.
4. We are now facing an economic scenario in which low economic growth rates or recession scenarios have been forecast for most Latin American and Caribbean countries. The limited recovery in the US and Canada did not include workers. This scenario entails even greater challenges to foster genuine development responding equitably to the environmental needs of present and future generations, with social justice and a greater share of salary in the national income.
5. The deregulated international financial system causes the crisis and does not generate employment. Just over 800 banks and investment funds already control more than 70% of global production. The phase of neoliberal globalization and financialization of wealth has widened inequalities across the world, even reversing a trend that began after the Second World War in some countries of the North. Two recent studies [Credit Suisse Bank and the International Oxfam NGO, published in January 2016] show that global inequality has worsened: 1% of the world population concentrates more wealth than the remaining 99%, and within the privileged minority 62 people accumulate wealth equivalent to what the poorest half of humanity has.

6. Structural adjustment policies implemented in some countries in response to this new cycle of crisis have only increased inequality in income distribution with the consequence of greater informality and exclusion, favoring the appropriation of income and concentration of wealth. At the same time we are facing a crisis of investment, a debt crisis, a crisis of idle money.
7. The strategy of large corporations, and of the governments supporting them, is based on launching the negotiation of new free trade agreements to put pressure and impose worse social and working conditions on workers in the countries involved. The Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements (IPPAs), in force in many countries, are part of the free trade architecture that represents the major threat of corporate power to the sovereignty of the nations.

Employment, Rights at Work and the Crisis

8. According to the ILO's report World Employment and Social Outlook-Trends 2015 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) almost 8 years after the great international crisis, the recovery of the labor market remains fragile and uneven. The modest economic growth registered in the second half of 2013 and early 2014 is fading, with large Eurozone countries causing the slowdown. The ILO considers that the recent turmoil in financial markets will thwart the task of reducing unemployment rates to pre-crisis levels.
9. The economic crisis is used by companies that seek to make governments impose measures to increase the precariousness of working conditions around the world. Workers' rights, particularly freedom of association and collective bargaining, are fundamental human rights and must be defended against the anti-crisis measures implemented at the national and international levels, to prevent their reversal.
10. Even in the main regional and global economy, the US economy, the recent economic recovery is taking place under precarious working conditions. Workers of this country suffer a prolonged attack on their right to organize, resulting in a deterioration of income distribution to the detriment of workers.
11. The negative impact of this economic scenario continues in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to the ILO 2015 Labor Overview, 1.7 million people joined the ranks of the unemployed in 2015 in the subregion. The same report states that the economic slowdown not only causes more unemployment, but also more informal labor. Women and young people are the segments most affected by these regressive tendencies.
12. Once again international financial agencies and large corporations seek to impose flexibilization policies on States through reforms to labor legislation, for workers from different countries to compete with each other for jobs and accept precarious working conditions. The ever-recurring argument presented by capital is the threat of offshoring and eliminating jobs if labor cuts are not accepted. The Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and the Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements (IPPAs) currently in force, contribute to that result.

13. Companies use outsourcing to avoid their legal responsibilities as employers and, in many cases, openly seek to make working conditions even more precarious and hinder the exercise of freedom of association and collective bargaining.
14. Imposing a world of flexible and deregulated labor also entails the existence of more precarious and insecure Jobs. The absence of public policies protecting workers and the irresponsibility of employers entail a loss of control and security mechanisms to protect the life and health of workers. We note the presence of new technologies and the use of chemical substances and products without proper verification of their effects on the health of workers, the population and the environment.

Economic Crisis and Threats to Democracy in the Americas

15. The imposition of a radical agenda of economic adjustment with limited social and rights content is a serious threat to political democracy in the countries of the region. The authoritarianism of the market pressures governments to reduce the already debilitated mechanisms of social protection. The attack against state-owned enterprises and public services represents a new wave of privatizations.
16. Given this situation, organizations of rural workers, feminists, environmentalists and other social expressions have been harassed, their rights have not been recognized, and their ability to react limited through the criminalization of the democratic fight and the violent persecution of their leaders.
17. Given this situation, the trade union movement fights for a protective and proactive role of the State in order to overcome the prevailing market logic under capital dominance. It is important to support public policies aimed at reaching the post-2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with the proposal of including full employment and ensuring a favorable environment to strengthen and develop trade union organizations.
18. The Trade Union Confederation of the Americas has warned of the destabilization of democracy in our continent, with the siege by the factual concentrated powers of capital, the media turned into neoliberal-like parties, as well as the executive, legislative and judicial branches. In some countries, such as Honduras, Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina, we have seen setbacks in civil liberties and an explicit persecution of civil society organizations and people who express a voice of opposition to conservative policies that have eliminated public policy instruments linked to culture, human rights and freedom of speech.
19. Some countries have seen a rise to power of conservative governments with restrictive economic, social and political agendas that attempt to reverse the progress evident in national constitutions, achieved during the decades of democratic struggles in the region. Evident also, a strong attack against

democratic progress which is valuable to society, such as the fight against discrimination and the inclusion of all citizens, regardless of race, social or ethnic origin, age or any other source of authoritarian exclusion and discrimination.

20. These neoliberal governments -with strong support from corporations and international institutions, and the national and international media conglomerates that defend the ideas of big capital- are decreasing society's democratic mechanisms of control, and thus increasing persecution and criminalization of social organizations.
21. More regrettable yet is that we are, once again, living different types of Coup d'États that use judicial or parliamentary institutionality, but that are in essence violating popular sovereignty. We had already condemned these coups in Honduras and Paraguay, which were constitutional ruptures that installed illegitimate governments that imposed radical adjustment programs and further failed to recognize human rights. Today poverty, social exclusion and violence prevail in these countries.
22. Brazil's democracy is on this same path today. Under arguments not related to criminal responsibility, the democratically elected president Dilma Rousseff has been removed and the illegitimate government –temporarily in power- has launched a fierce attack against the social, political and economic achievements accomplished during Brazil's 30 years of democracy. Democratic consciousness in Brazil and in the world has condemned this institutional Coup which hides a regressive agenda on social and cultural aspects, and is at the service of big capital and free market, as well as going against regional integration.
23. This setback, seen retrospectively since our last meeting in 2015 in Washington DC, makes us question the gap that emerged between the international discourse to promote an enabling environment and a focus on rights, and the setbacks that the region is experiencing. In particular, Berta Cáceres' assassination, an Honduran environmentalist, the detention without due process of the Argentine social activist Milagro Sala, and the bias of justice in many countries – with President Dilma Rousseff's impeachment being the quintessential case for this new social order - highlights that conservative forces have advanced in our region in opposition to the commitments undertaken in the 2030 Agenda, particularly with Goal 16.3 to "Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all."
24. We are concerned with the current financial crisis of the OAS and we reiterate our support to this regional organization and to the work that it carries out on its pillars of respect for human rights, democracy, integral development and security in the region. In line with the theme for this year's General Assembly, we underscore the work done by the OAS on institutional strengthening and its support to the design and implementation of public policies in different areas. Further, we reiterate our statements during last year's General Assembly that "the new OAS must be a place for the diversity

of political, cultural, ethnic, and racial expressions of the nations which make up the organization to respectfully come together and for the tolerant convergence of different political and ideological projects and democratic models”. Moreover, “in an ever more multipolar world, the OAS must be a reference and space to express the force of a region which has demonstrated its ever growing weight in the definition of global affairs”.

25. We are also concerned with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights’ (IACHR) current financial crisis, which will force it to suspend their sessions this semester. The OAS Member States need to commit to finding effective and immediate financial solutions for both the OAS and the institutions created under the Inter-American Human Rights System (Court and Commission), as well as the other HR protection mechanisms created under the OAS. Otherwise, our regions’ human rights advances in recent years will be circumvented, and the existence of democratic restriction and human rights violations will be reinstated in our continent.

Our vision on Sustainable Development and the opportunity of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

26. We defend a development concept that is economic, social, and environmentally sustainable, based not only on the earnings and profit from capital, but also on the preservation of the planet for the next generations, ensuring a just transition towards a low carbon economy for developing countries, and recognizing the active and democratic role of the State. This vision is exposed in the Development Platform of the Americas (DPA / PLADA) and ratified in the documents adopted in the 3rd TUCA Congress, which express that sustainable development can only be achieved through the increased participation of workers, women and youth, and diverse workers’ movements and social organizations. Further, it should promote economic growth with effective redistribution of wealth, respect for human rights, gender equality, decent work, and the free circulation of people and social protection and social inclusion.
27. Trade union movements have celebrated the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, with its fundamental motto being “leave no one behind”. This challenges our continent to develop a strategy to transform the current development model. The 2030 Agenda is an integral and indivisible action plan, and all of its goals are necessary for the development of a regional inclusive model where no one is left behind. We are conscious that, being an ambitious challenge, our continent’s priority must still be to elevate the well-being of our people by eradicating hunger, poverty, and reducing inequality in all of its forms, but for that we must reach a productive model with decent work, an infrastructure program and inclusive industrialization.
28. As ECLAC stated in their recent 36th session in Mexico City, “The world faces the challenge of having to change its pattern of development, which is no longer sustainable”. The 2030 Agenda constitutes an unmatched opportunity to transform the predatory model based on the overexploitation of natural resources and of workers – coexisting with forms of modern slavery

that humiliate humanity – that have concentrated wealth disproportionately and has put our planet at the edge of collapsing.

29. The conjunction of a recessive economy, whose crises escalate regionally, is greatly hurting Latin America and the Caribbean with the reduction of commodity prices, lack of demand in international commerce, and excess of liquidity. In the past, this combination of factors caused a short term speculative capital inflow in the region, which did not lead to a greater good to society, but to an increased concentration of wealth and unsustainable foreign debt accumulation.
30. Against this risky setting, we emphasize the need for the development of a regional regulatory tax framework that refracts and penalizes all off-shore financial systems. This objective was already expressed by trade unions and reinforced by the ECLAC in the Addis Adaba Action Agenda for Financing for Development, (NNUU, 2015), where the advancement on regulating the global financial system was modest. In line with point 22 of the AAAA, the OAS member states have committed to improve the equity, transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness of its tax systems, through a progressive and modernized tax system.
31. The idea that retraction of the economy and the need to restrict public spending is achieved by limiting the prevalence of the private sector as assignor of resources guarantor of the capitalist economy has been instated in the discourse of all international organizations.
32. The privatizing paradigm, which proved false after the recurrent crises of the '90s, has led to the height of the public-private partnerships (PPP), which are presented as “innovative” and more efficient ways of cooperation and development. The trade union movement in the Americas denounces that these modalities to leverage development investments, in particular for infrastructure, must always have the State as regulator and political instrument for wealth redistribution.
33. The empirical evidence has demonstrated that in the vast majority of cases, PPPs result in more costly methods of financing, and reducing public expenditure have made them even more costly. Likewise, the construction and transaction costs of PPPs are more elevated than public works, they are not efficient, and accountability is also insufficient or non-existent. Governments and financial institutions should focus on developing the appropriate tools to evaluate if PPPs are a desirable alternative and in what contexts. We denounce that in the majority of developing countries that have adopted this type of alliance, poverty and inequality have not been reduced, and the environmental impact of the projects and investments have not been evaluated.
34. As it was stated in the last TUCA Congress, the State has to be the protagonist and guarantor of the design, implementation and evaluation of development politics, based on the priorities democratically expressed by their population. We reject the privatization of cooperation as it aims at private

profit rather than the development of the peoples. Likewise we defend the development financing systems that respect the democratic sovereignty of states and are based on the mobilization of domestic resources, through progressive fiscal reforms, labor formalization policy, the strengthening of wage and social protection policy, as well as mechanisms for collective negotiation and social dialogue.

35. Acknowledging that all Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are interrelated and express an integral vision of development, the trade union movement considers especially relevant the objectives connected to: end poverty in all its forms everywhere (SDG 1), including through “implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all” (SDG 1.3); end hunger and achieve food security (SDG 2); ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (SDG 3); ensure inclusive and equitable quality education (SDG 4); achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (SDG 5); promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (SDG 8); build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation (goal 9); reduce inequality within and among countries (SDG10); take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (SDG 13); and promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels (SDG 16).
36. Our continent has grown in the last decade but it still holds as part of its unfaltering destiny to be the most unequal region in the planet. Through the 2030 Agenda, Member States have committed to reducing inequality within and among countries (SDG10), which requires policies that can translate into effective equality between men and women. This equality must start with a precise and executive commitment to reduce the femicide, rates, which are an ethical disgrace to our people. Without gender politics to put an end to all forms of discrimination, of sexual identity, of violence that inhibits the full and effective participation of women and equal opportunities (SDG 5, goal 5.5), as well as universal access to sexual health and reproductive rights, our continent will not meet Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda to reach gender parity and empower all women and girls.
37. Equally essential for social justice in the Americas are the commitments of the 2030 agenda relative to the workplace (SDG 8), where all Member States commit to “achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value” by 2030 (goal 8.5), as well as taking immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labor, end modern slavery and human trafficking in all its forms (goal 8.7).
38. We consider that this General Assembly of the OAS in Santo Domingo, must send an important message that our region has a commitment to policies that advance sustainable growth, that break the logic of economic conservatism, restrictive of rights and in favor of corporate interests that dominate the global economy. We the trade unions of the Americas know that

the struggle to achieve this objective is also associated with the uncompromising defense of real and effective democracy in our countries, the promotion of sovereign integration of our nations and peoples, and the confrontation with the agenda of free trade that limits our international insertion in a non-dependant and colonial manner.

Santo Domingo, June 12th, 2016