



americas
business
dialogue



Policy Dialogue
Private sector in the context of the pandemic:
The pending challenge of social inclusion in the Americas

Tuesday July 27th, 2021
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (EST)

Context

The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected Latin America, a region characterized by weak social protection structures, fragmented health systems, high degrees of labor informality and deep inequalities that have been exacerbated in a complex economic, social and political scenario which experienced a significant number of political crises and social protests in 2019.

According to projections of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) presented in its *Annual Report Social Panorama of Latin America 2020*: the economic recession will imply a fall in GDP of -7.7%, placing the extreme poverty rate at 12.5% and extreme poverty rate reached 33.7% of the population. The total number of poor people reached 209 million at the end of 2020, 22 million more than in 2019.

Considering the dimension of the impact of the pandemic and the need to address the pending challenge of advancing towards social inclusion, a coordinated response by States, the business sector and multilateral institutions is essential. The current crisis provides an opportunity to reimagine and “*build back better*” a more sustainable and equitable future, having as a vision the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) as well as the 2030 Agenda.

Within this framework, the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights, established by Resolution 17/4 of the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2011, has developed a broad agenda on the issue of participation of companies and their link to sustainable development from a human rights perspective.

From the Inter-American system, the Office of the Special Rapporteur on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights (REDESCA) of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) of the OAS, has been in charge of systematizing state duties, as well as compliance with the companies based on Inter-American legal experience, consigned in the Report “*Business and Human Rights: Inter-American Standards*”¹.

For its part, within the framework of the Summits of the Americas Process, sustainable development and the inclusion of populations has been the subject of special attention by the leaders of the region,

¹ Spanish version of the report is available at: <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/informes/pdfs/EmpresasDDHH.pdf>

expressed in multiple mandates urging the States to take measures to promote economic development with equity and ensuring greater social inclusion.

In the scope of the universal system, the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights, created when the Guiding Principles were adopted, has developed a broad agenda on the issue of business participation and its link to sustainable development from a human rights perspective.

In the framework of the preparation of the Ninth Summit of the Americas, the Summits of the Americas Secretariat, in coordination with REDESCA, join forces to generate a dialogue that allows analyzing the role of the business sector as a determining factor in the recovery of social and economic impact caused by COVID-19. This dialogue seeks to collect the work of international organizations on the subject and based on the analysis, offer recommendations that allow to nurture the debate on social inclusion in the post-pandemic.

Likewise, this event builds on the efforts of the Business Dialogue for the Americas (ABD), facilitated by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), to conduct high-level exchanges with the governments of the region in the formulation and implementation of public policies.

Guiding questions

Taking into account the recommendations of the report “*Business and Human Rights: Inter-American Standards*”² and, especially, IACHR Resolution 1/2020 on Pandemic and Human Rights in the Americas, addressed to the OAS member states:

“Demand and monitor that companies respect human rights, adopt due diligence processes in the field of human rights and are accountable for possible abuses and negative impacts on human rights, particularly due to the effects that the contexts of pandemic and infectious health crises often generate on the ESCR of the populations and groups in the most vulnerable situation and, in general, on people who work, people with sensitive medical conditions and local communities. Companies have a key role to play in these contexts and their conduct must be guided by the applicable human rights principles and rules”.

1. What is the progress status of the business and human rights agenda in the region?
2. Considering the challenges in terms of social inclusion posed by the pandemic, where should the emphasis of the private sector be on the agenda for economic and social recovery from a human rights and sustainable development perspective?
3. How can the private sector, governments and civil society advance an economic and social recovery agenda aligned with human rights and sustainable development? What recommendations would you make in this regard for the Summits of the Americas Process?

² IACHR/Resolution 1/20, Pandemic and Human Rights in the Americas, <https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/decisions/pdf/Resolution-1-20-en.pdf>; Resolution 4/20, Resolution on Human Rights for people with COVID-19: <https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/decisions/pdf/Resolution-4-20-en.pdf>; Resolution 1/21, COVID-19 vaccines and Inter-American Rights and obligations, <https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/decisions/pdf/Resolucion-1-21-en.pdf>.

Based on the discussions, the Summits Secretariat will prepare a conclusion note with the key issues addressed. The session will be broadcast by Webcast and there will be simultaneous interpretation in English and Spanish.

PRELIMINARY PROGRAM

Tuesday, July 27th 2021

10:00 am - 10:15 am Introduction and Welcome

- Maria Celina Conte, Acting Director of the Summits of the Americas Secretariat, Organization of American States (OAS)
- Soledad García Muñoz, Special Rapporteur on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights (REDESCA) of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) of the OAS
- Fabrizio Operti, Integration and Trade Sector Manager, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

10:15 am - 11:45 am Discussion moderated by Lelia Mooney, Executive Director, Center for the Advancement of the Rule of Law, Georgetown University

Speakers

- Soledad García Muñoz, Special Rapporteur on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights of the IACHR / OAS
- Maria Caridad Araujo, Chief of Sector, Gender and Diversity, Interamerican Development Bank (IADB)
- Dante Pesce, Focal Point for Latin America, United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights
- Paula Uribe, Director of Public Policies and Government, PEPSI CO (Member of the Americas Business Dialogue)
- Marta Pujadas, Chair of the Trade Union Technical Advisory Council (COSATE)
- Neil Herrington, Director, Americas, US American Chamber of Commerce

Conclusion

Summits of the Americas Secretariat