

June 7, 2021

**Speech by the President of CLATE, Julio Fuentes,
109th International Labor Conference of the ILO**

Mr. President of the 109th International Labor Conference, government and employer representatives and fellow workers.

I address you in my capacity as President of the Confederation of Latin American and Caribbean State Workers, a 54 year old union, present in 18 countries in this region and comprised of 87 national unions representing 4,570,000 affiliates.

The pandemic prompts us to seek “International Action to Facilitate a Human-Centered Response to COVID-19”. This is urgent, as its devastating effects continue to impact on the health, possibilities and working conditions of millions of people.

As never before, State workers have brought to light the value of public services. We were and we still are on the front line in the battle against the pandemic, opposing those who trumpeted adjustment and a minimalist State for decades.

We achieved this especially from public health services, from local municipalities, social services, education, security, transportation, from the administration of justice and from all the areas that continued to function despite the sanitary restrictions. I want to express my immense gratitude and appreciation to all my fellow workers.

Years of public investment aimed at scientific and technological development paid off and allowed the developing of vaccines to face this pandemic in record time.

But the prevailing unequal global development and the patent system promoted by the WTO and the Intellectual Property Agreements (IPAs) made that vaccines obtained thanks to these advances to be hoarded by the world's richest nations, to the detriment of the poorest ones. That is why we demand the worldwide equally release of patents for manufacturing and public distribution.

Today, in the face of economic stagnation, only States can dynamize societies by providing resources to guarantee a minimum income for that important part of the population deprived of access to work.

First and foremost, this requires tax reforms based on principles of fiscal justice to enable us to obtain resources from the most privileged sectors of our societies. And, secondly, to redirect these resources to production and consumption, which would



invigorate domestic markets.

Another chapter is public indebtedness. Investigating odious debts and condoning them if appropriate, or refinancing them in the long term, should be our guiding compass on this matter.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to express CLATE's support for the regulatory proposal that sister organizations such as ULATOC, PSI, among others, have been promoting to address the problems of workers in this important sector.

I would like to appeal to the tripartite constituents present here to reinforce our commitment to world peace and the convening of social dialogue, particularly in the sister Republic of Colombia, whose people are resisting an onslaught of violence and repression these days, and which must come to an end without delay.

Thank you.

Julio Fuentes
President of CLATE

Lorem Ipsum

