

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS OF THE 2ND CIELO WORLD CONGRESS
“FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND GLOBALIZATION:
PROTECTING THE EMPLOYMENT, HEALTH AND PRIVATE LIFE OF WORKERS
IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGES AHEAD”

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Ladies and gentlemen:

I have the great honour of presenting the general conclusions of the second CIELO Network World Congress in the beautiful and tranquil city of Montevideo – a city that is rich in both history and culture. The theme of the Congress is the *"Fourth Industrial Revolution and Globalization: Protecting the Employment, Health and Private Life of Workers in the Face of Challenges Ahead"*. Held here at the University of the Republic, the Congress brought together labour scholars from 17 countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Spain, France, Italy, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Switzerland, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Formally, the Congress was held over two rather intense days, with three plenary sessions held each day – including this formal concluding meeting. In addition, there were 15 thematic sessions (as a part of which 12 seminars were given). Several posters were presented in addition to an International Labour Organization (ILO) report and various books.

The quality of participation was quite high, and we should congratulate the approximately 140 participants who presented papers of such scientific rigor in so short a period of time. Their thoughts and conclusions have allowed me to draw up the following general conclusions. I have attempted to take into account the content of each of the plenary and thematic meetings, grouping the aforementioned conclusions into thematic blocks.

I should start with what the Fourth Industrial Revolution means for employment and the challenges that await us. Companies that are connected and managed using automatic artificial intelligence processes and technological platforms have generated a new type of worker that is more autonomous and capable of innovation and adaptation to change. That disruption is causing debate about the protection of the worker by existing institutions and under the existing standards of labour law and social security. As has been said during this Congress, the technology that has caused these changes must be treated not only as an instrument of oppression that can affect the fundamental rights of workers and human dignity, but as a means of liberation that can serve to check whether those rights are respected by the Labour Inspectorate itself. In that sense, it has been affirmed that, from a legal and ethical point of view, social dialogue and regulation at the national and international levels can ensure that technology serves the human being in an integral way – not only as a consumer and entrepreneur, but also as a worker.

Therefore, the **first general conclusion**, which seems basic to me, is that **technology must serve the human being. Human dignity** as a foundation of coexistence must be preserved from the dangers of disruptive technologies. Therefore, **state and international regulations and social dialogue are the mechanisms** that should ensure that the rule of law prevails, defending the human rights of citizens and workers against the risks that technology may cause.

The **second general conclusion** is that **in the digital era** it is necessary to address the **concept of the worker** within the new manifestations of the employment relationship. It is also necessary, in general, to reconfigure the Fourth Industrial Revolution's digital employment in order to rethink the scope of Labour Law, enhancing the human rights at work with a view to incorporating ethical values within companies. Likewise, in view of the technological advances of the fourth revolution, **it is also necessary to redesign the norms governing the employer model.**

Third conclusion: **Finding a solution at the national level to the issues raised by the internalization of labour relations requires that we, once and for all, address challenges from an international perspective.** Without intending to be exhaustive, we can mention some of the factors and risks that should be taken into account: the elaboration of smart contracts embedded in contracts that can more or less be executed automatically; e-Sports or video game competitions on online platforms; company outsourcing; the dynamic transformation of the labour market; the digitalization of the labour market and its impact on health (the right to disconnect and social protection of workers), etc.

Fourth general conclusion: **Globalization requires a new global social contract** to achieve an international governance model that is based on international labour principles, with decent work for all, and that respects democratic liberties and individual and collective rights in labour relations, as well as the long-awaited universalization of social protection in Latin America. It is necessary to apply expansionary policies that can contain the advent of adverse economic cycles and that ensure a level of competition with respect to other emerging economies, according to the measures proposed by the Inter-American Development Bank.

Fifth general conclusion: **We must face the challenges posed by new technologies to the fundamental rights of workers.**

For example, sexual harassment at work has been considered a form of gender violence that requires the establishment of public policies on mental health aimed at the entire population and that allow work to be carried out in a healthy and balanced environment.

Freedom of expression via social networks is still in need of appropriate balance between the rights of workers with regard to their privacy, and the rights of companies to control and to have a good name.

Likewise, it is necessary to protect the worker against new forms of discrimination because of sexual orientation or gender. Accordingly, the LGBTI community requires protection under international law and within each State. Faced with situations of harassment, stress and burnout syndrome, a law is needed where there is no law so that the subjects of the legal relationship assume the ethical responsibility of ensuring healthy work environments.

The right to strike is regaining importance, given that technologies can favour the use of strikebreaking: technological strikebreaking. In that regard, it is necessary to have social dialogue as a means of resolving conflicts.

Sixth general conclusion: In terms of reconciling personal and professional life and worker privacy, **a set of regulations is necessary** to provide workers with the necessary adjustments to combat the past practice of the twentieth century: guarantee working hours with measures for work/life balance (principle of gender equality); preserve the right to privacy when service provision is carried out using such new technologies as, for example, telecommuting.

I do not want to continue further, as I assume we are all wanting to leave.

I would like to thank all those who have participated in and made this Congress possible. We have had a very fruitful exchange of ideas.

And since we are in Uruguay, I would like to end with a quote attributed to the famous poet Mario Benedetti that, in my opinion, is a perfect illustration of the situation of Work in the face of the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, globalization and a world in constant evolution: "*When we thought we had all the answers, suddenly, all the questions changed*".

Many thanks to all of you.

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