

Joint Statement of the Labor Affairs Council of the United States – Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement

Washington, D.C.
June 5, 2013

The Labor Affairs Council (the Council) of the United States – Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement (TPA) convened its first meeting on June 4-5, 2013, in Washington, D.C. Pursuant to Article 17.5 of the TPA, the Council is responsible for overseeing the implementation of Chapter 17 (the Labor Chapter) of the TPA, including reviewing each Party's progress under the chapter. It is comprised of senior officials from the labor ministries and other appropriate agencies or ministries. Participants in the meeting included Seth D. Harris, Acting Secretary of Labor; Rafael Pardo, Minister of Labor of Colombia; and Carlos Urrutia, Colombian Ambassador to the United States.

During the meeting, the Council reaffirmed the Parties' commitments under the Labor Chapter, including the commitment to adopt and maintain in law and practice the rights as stated in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The Council further clarified the domestic mechanisms, institutions, and procedures that each Party has established to advance the fulfillment of the Labor Chapter's provisions. The Council also held in-depth discussions on several topics, including: (1) the vision of the new Colombian Ministry of Labor and activities to strengthen institutional capacity and labor law enforcement and compliance; (2) multilateral cooperation and technical assistance and capacity building; and (3) the Labor Chapter's implementation and areas of particular concern. The Council recognized the significant progress that Colombia has made but also that challenges remain. The Parties committed to remain engaged on a regular and continuing basis to vigorously address those challenges in order to ensure full implementation of the Labor Chapter.

Pursuant to Article 17.5.4 of the TPA, a public session took place the morning of June 5. The Council convened workers, employers, civil society organizations, and the general public to discuss matters relating to the implementation of the Labor Chapter. The Parties recognize that public sessions ensure transparency in the administration of the Labor Chapter and further the successful implementation of the Labor Chapter's obligations.