



# BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL LABOR AFFAIRS

## United States Department of Labor

### Office of International Relations

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### *Who we are...*

The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of International Labor Affairs' Office of International Relations (OIR) fulfills three functions:

**International Labor Organization:** OIR plays the lead role within the U.S. government (USG) on policy and program issues in the International Labor Organization (ILO).

- The ILO is a specialized UN agency that is intended to promote rights at work, foster employment opportunities, and improve working conditions and incomes around the world.
- The ILO is unique among UN agencies because its tripartite structure provides for participation by employers and workers as well as governments. Thus, the U.S. is represented by government officials, American workers and employer representatives.

**International Organizations:** OIR has the lead role in representing the USG in the labor and employment components of several key international organizations and fora, including the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the G-8, the US-EU Working Group on Employment and Labor-related Issues, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the Organization of American States (OAS), Summit of the Americas and the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor (IACML).

- The OECD is a multilateral organization comprising 30 of the world's leading economies, which represents approximately one billion people and more than half the world's economy. The organization's Employment, Labor and Social Affairs (ELSA) Directorate has been at the forefront of international efforts to address problems of employment, skills development and training, and other related labor issues.
- The G-8 Labor and Employment Ministers Meeting is a forum for labor ministers from developed countries to discuss and compare approaches to common employment and training challenges that G-8 countries must address in order to strengthen their labor markets and promote economic growth. The Meeting takes place once a year.

- The US-EU Working Group on Employment and Labor-related Issues was established in 1996. Over the years it has sponsored a number of meetings, workshops and conferences that provide an opportunity for exchanging ideas and information on employment- and labor-related issues.
- APEC was established in 1989 to promote economic cooperation and integration in the Asia-Pacific region. OIR is the lead USG agency within APEC's Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG), which addresses issues dealing with worker training, education, human resources, productivity, and management.
- The OAS brings together the 34 democratically-elected nations of the western hemisphere to strengthen cooperation on democratic values, defend common interests and confront shared problems. The IACML is a meeting of the western hemisphere's Labor Ministers, held about every two years under the auspices of the OAS, to promote hemispheric cooperation on labor issues.

**Foreign Policy:** OIR provides technical and policy advice to senior Department of Labor, Department of State, and other USG agency officials on matters related to international labor and contributes to the conduct of the State Department's labor diplomacy mission:

- OIR works with the Department of State to prepare and train Foreign Service Officers for duty as labor officers and labor reporting officers stationed in U.S. embassies abroad. These officers provide critical support to the United States in securing its foreign policy objectives that have a labor component and to DOL in carrying out its international responsibilities.
- OIR manages the Department of Labor's Foreign Visitors Program. Each year, the Department of Labor hosts from 250 to 1,000 international visitors, representing ministries of labor, business groups, universities, trade unions, and other governmental and non-governmental organizations.
- OIR staffs and leads DOL participation in the U.S.– Vietnam Labor Dialogue. The Dialogue was established between the U.S. Department of Labor and the Vietnamese Ministry of Labor in 2000 to provide a forum for the two sides to discuss labor issues, given the absence of labor provisions in the U.S. – Vietnamese Bilateral Trade Agreement.
- OIR Area Advisers stay abreast of labor, political, and economic developments in countries and regions of strategic importance to the United States, such as China and the Middle East, and provide technical and policy advice to senior USG officials in these areas. OIR also conducts research in specialized areas to inform U.S. policy makers.



Deputy Under Secretary (DUS) for International Affairs Charlotte M. Ponticelli, attends a September 11<sup>th</sup> memorial service at the U.S. Embassy in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.



DUS Ponticelli delivers remarks at the XV Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor held September 2007 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.