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STATEMENTS BY THE YOUNG AMERICAS BUSINESS TRUST

(Erika María Galeano Cañete, Katherin Méndez, Edgar Maestre)

Remarks by Erika María Galeano Cañete

Good afternoon to the authorities of the OAS member states and the OAS General Secretariat, which is chairing this SIRG meeting, as well as to the other representatives from different sectors present here today.

My name is Erika María Galeano Cañete, I am a young professional from Paraguay, and I am here today representing the youth of the Americas. Complementing what was said by the youth spokespersons previously, I am going to talk about the importance of international partnerships in supporting young migrants and refugees.

As a recent UNCTAD and IOM publication points out, entrepreneurship can be an effective way to include migrants and refugees in local economies, share their knowledge and entrepreneurial spirit, and create new market opportunities and cross-border networks.

Considering the importance of entrepreneurship as a tool to address the migration in the long term, with a special focus on youth, the Young Americas Business Trust (YABT) and USA for IOM - National Committee of the International Organization for Migration in the United States, are pleased to inform you of the consolidation of their strategic partnership, which has resulted in the development—and implementation in the coming days—of the first edition of the Innovation Challenge *Juventud en Movimiento* (Youth in Motion)

The Challenge seeks to help young people to accelerate their innovative ideas and new business models, with the aim of promoting and facilitating the socioeconomic integration of migrants and refugees, which will have a direct, positive social impact in beneficiary countries and the rest of the region.

The Challenge will be open to initiatives related to three priorities: Gender inclusion and equity, socioeconomic integration, and socioeconomic reactivation.

This initiative is also consistent with the Declaration on Migration and Protection adopted at the Ninth Summit of the Americas, and as a follow-up to the Declaration and Plan of Action of the Sixth Young Americas Forum, where youth have been pursuing a series of actions to support young migrants in the region, as reflected last June at the Youth Dialogue: Migration, Development, and Integration, held in Lima, Peru, by the YABT and USA for IOM.

Youth participation in entrepreneurship is of crucial importance, as mentioned during the Youth Dialogue by Carlos Carrasco, a young Venezuelan immigrant leader who was also a youth spokesperson at the recent OAS General Assembly. Mr. Carrasco said that entrepreneurship is a path that offers effective measures for the insertion and labor protection for migrants and refugees in transit and receiving countries.

Given this scenario, and with the aim of briefing SIRG representatives, I would like to highlight one of the recommendations made by young people at the Youth Dialogue: Migration, Development and Integration: To continue strengthening ties between the public sector, the private sector, and different civil society actors, promoting competency-building actions in relation to entrepreneurship and measures that not only favor the economic, social, scientific, technological, and other sectors, but also are designed to improve the quality of life of migrants.

Likewise, they have also expressed the importance of encouraging the insertion of migrant and refugee youth in sectors where they can contribute to the GDP of the receiving, transit, or host country. To that end, the design of inclusive entrepreneurial projects that provide economic opportunities for young migrants or refugees is also identified. These projects can generate employment, strengthen social cohesion, and contribute to local economic development.

Another recommendation proposed at the working tables of the Youth Dialogue was the development of entrepreneurial skills, which is fundamental for promoting equitable access to professional training, incubation programs, and business resources. This includes the creation of spaces for the skills development, marketing of products and services, and specific financing opportunities for young migrants or refugees who wish to create their own businesses, in order to increase a country's human and financial capital.

This array of actions is associated with and reinforces the Innovation Challenge: Youth in Motion, which we will be launching in the coming days. It aims to give young people the opportunity to settle, encourage economic growth, foster social cohesion, and reduce the gaps caused by their marginalization as migrants.

We hope that many young entrepreneurs can continue their training, have their own business, and find the desired socioeconomic integration with their host communities, all of which are part of the objectives of this whole effort that I have mentioned today, which commits to the ongoing creation of entrepreneurship policies with initiatives of this type and, when they materialize, comprehensive and inclusive development in the region.

More details about Innovation Challenge: Youth in Motion will be available at www.ticamericas.net

I conclude my speech by calling on member states, the private sector, and multilateral organizations to get behind this and other initiatives so that we can jointly strengthen entrepreneurial ideas, which will lead to reducing the gaps that come with migrant status.

Remarks by Katherin Méndez

Distinguished representatives, national coordinators, and officers of the Summit Implementation Review Group; representatives of civil society, the private sector and other social actors,

Thank you very much for the opportunity given to youth to share their progress and contributions to the Summits of the Americas process.

My name is Katherin Méndez. I am a young Venezuelan woman currently living in Peru and an internationalist by profession. As part of the Young Americas Forum process, I have the responsibility to speaking on behalf of the youth of the Americas and sharing our progress and current initiatives aimed at protecting and improving our environment, as well as empowering youth, especially youth entrepreneurship.

Latin America and the Caribbean is a unique region. The glaciers of Patagonia, the jungles of Central America, the Andes mountains, the beaches of the Caribbean, and the great lung that is the Amazon rainforest, make up both our wealth and our identity; therefore, more than a duty, it is a necessity to preserve them in all their dimensions. The Summit of the Americas, through the Young Americas Forum, has been key to this regional development.

Youth dialogues have not only enabled an exchange of ideas and opinions, but opened spaces for understanding, for cooperation between communities, and have shown us that the voice of youth must be present in all spaces in the search for solutions. An example of this has been the work carried out in the area of environmental protection, where we have developed campaigns for the collection and reuse of plastics and the reinvention of products from waste, thus promoting the circular economy for plastics and mitigating the negative impact of their mismanagement and use.

At the same time, the innovation contributed by young people has been valuable in finding different and replicable solutions. Through the 14 editions of the Eco-Challenge in partnership with PepsiCo, we have supported the development of more than 22,000 sustainable enterprises, including the winner of the Eco-Challenge, Bottleyes, in which young Ecuadorians have transformed recycled plastics into affordable lenses for people in low-income sectors, allowing them to see properly again and go about their daily lives as normal.

Nor should we forget how young people have adapted new technologies to today's challenges. An example of this is ReciclApp, a Mexican venture that developed an application connects the waste market, avoiding its post-consumer mismanagement.

The space and tools provided to young people to solve problems in our society should be something that we share as a region, and so we present InnovAction Challenge 2.0.

Through the Talent and Innovation Competition of the Americas (TIC Americas) 2024, we have designed and built InnovAction Challenge 2.0 hand in hand with the Inter-American Foundation. This second iteration of the Challenge promotes entrepreneurship, sustainable development, and environmental resilience in Latin America and the Caribbean, with a special focus on vulnerable groups. This time, the Challenge promotes eco-conscious business models in emerging economies like ours and will provide resources to support youth in developing innovation and sustainable solutions. Participants will also have the opportunity to access seed capital, mentoring, connections, content, and visibility, among other benefits.

The program seeks to address environmental resilience through the development of green solutions that increase energy efficiency, reduce waste, and protect and manage natural resources. All this, through empowerment of young people, where training and the promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation will be key to the formulation of sustainable proposals for their community, which, in turn, will be consolidated as concrete contributions by youth to the Summits of the Americas process.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change states that this is no longer a problem of the future; we are seeing the effects now in an acceleration in natural disasters, communities forcibly displaced, and suffering from food insecurity as a result of droughts or floods.

The context demands action, and the commitments made by the member states at the recent Summit of the Americas have set guidelines for the challenges we will face. Promoting energy efficiency and encouraging rational and efficient energy use is part of the challenges we want to address in this year's version of TIC Americas in response to the efforts to implement the Summit agreements. We should also take into account other commitments that are incumbent upon us, such as cooperation with different sectors of society, with States, and even with the international community, as well as legislation that allows for greater sustainable development.

Finally, I would like to thank the member states for their commitment to youth participation and invite them to be spokespersons for this edition of TIC Americas and encourage the youth of their countries to be part of this support platform, which will be available from November 1 onwards at www.ticamericas.net.

Remarks by Edgar Maestre

Good afternoon. My warmest greetings to the officers of this meeting and to the other speakers and guests.

As you have already mentioned, my name is Edgar Maestre, and I am writing to you in my capacity as program director at Young Americas Business Trust (YABT), an international non-profit organization that works in cooperation with the Organization of American States.

Today I have the honor of addressing you to present a brief summary of our activities this year and the plans and activities for the months ahead in three areas:

First, the follow-up to the Ninth Summit and its connection with different political dialogue forums:

In this sense, and as part of the follow-up to the implementation of the mandates of the Ninth Summit of the Americas, YABT participated and brought the voice and actions of youth to two very important processes at the hemispheric and global level: the Second Summit for Democracy and the First Cities Summit of the Americas.

Regarding the Second Summit for Democracy, in March 2023, YABT presented a rich report with more than 30 specific contributions resulting from a youth consultation that culminated in the *Policy Laboratory: Youth and Participatory Democracy*, held in a hybrid format in Costa Rica with support from the Government of Costa Rica, USAID, Google, and Johns Hopkins University.

A month later, YABT arranged for the participation of a delegation of youth leaders and entrepreneurs in the First Cities Summit of the Americas in Denver, with two content sessions on digital transformation and urban entrepreneurship held at the Youth Summit. In that framework, YABT also organized the Emerging Entrepreneurs Village at the Innovation Plaza with the presence of 13 promising innovative ventures that are the result of the continued support of programs such as TIC Americas.

Within the framework of the fifty-third regular session of the OAS General Assembly, we held the Young Americas Dialogue in a hybrid format, with the presence of the Secretary General and Assistant Secretary General of the OAS and the Permanent Representative of the United States to the OAS. The report presents 39 actions implemented by youth and 52 proposals around the issues of strengthening democracy, climate resilience, connectivity and digital transformation, migration, fighting corruption, and inclusion and equality.

The week prior to the Hemispheric Dialogue, we held the Youth Dialogue: Migration, Development and Integration in Peru in partnership with USA for IOM, IOM Peru, and San Ignacio de Loyola University. The previous youth consultation received more than 100 contributions, to which the results of the working groups were added, resulting in a detailed report of the process.

Given these important milestones in 2023, I would like to move on to the second point of my remarks: the road ahead towards the Seventh Young Americas Forum at the Tenth Summit of the Americas.

YABT has already reached out to the Government of the Dominican Republic and presented plans for a permanent, open and coordinated process for the youth of the Hemisphere to provide youth with a strengthened, broad and diverse channel of participation, based on the best practices of past summits.

It is worth highlighting the seven years of work with Banco de Reservas de la República Dominicana, which includes initiatives such as TIC República Dominicana in 2015, 2016, and 2017. We will continue our work to ensure that these results are a springboard for the activities ahead of the next Summit.

To conclude, the third and last point of my remarks is to inform you that in November 2023, as part of the TIC Americas Program, we will be launching InnovAction Challenge 2.0 and the Innovation Challenge: Youth in Motion.

In taking my leave, I thank you sincerely for your attention and allowing me to address you today.