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Protection for migrant workers the focus of OAS workshop

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WASHINGTON, USA: Labour experts from member countries of the Organization of American States (OAS) gather in Ottawa, Canada, November 28 and 29 for a workshop to discuss strategies for the promotion of migrant workers' rights.

Entitled "Migrant Workers: Protection of Labour Rights and Labour Market Programs," the workshop will provide an opportunity for exchange and discussion by labour officials from 27 countries of the region.

Canada's Minister of Labour, Jean-Pierre Blackburn, will open the conference along with the Director of Political Analysis for Mexico's Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare, Eduardo Velasquillo, and the Director of the OAS Department of Social Development and Employment, Francisco Pilotti.

Among those scheduled to attend are the labour ministers of Ecuador, Paraguay and Suriname as well as the International Labour Organization's Assistant Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean Virgilio Levaggi.

During their two-day meeting the experts will discuss cooperation on the promotion of migrant workers' labour rights and migration processes implemented by states in accordance with their domestic laws.

They will share experiences and discuss labour market promotion and protection programs, with special emphasis on Canada's temporary migrant workers program. They will also review lessons learned and guidelines for future hemispheric action on this topic.

The Fourth Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata, Argentina, in November 2005 and the September 2005 Ninth Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour in Mexico both reaffirmed that "all migrants, regardless of their immigration status, should be accorded the full protection of human rights and the full observance of labour laws applicable to them."

Accordingly, with several countries confirming their interest in sharing experiences on the issue, the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor decided to convene a workshop on migrant workers' labour rights, to be organised by the OAS in conjunction with Human Resources and Social Development Canada.

Mexico is the current pro tempore Chair of the Ninth Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour, for which the OAS acts as technical secretariat.

Among other participants, the workshop will also bring together representatives of the region's labour unions and business organizations as well as international organizations and observers.

Canada's delegation will include representatives of the federal, provincial and municipal ministries

of labour and employment as well as other government departments, civil society and academic institutions.