



# The Spirit of Vancouver is Driving Change in the Development Model

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Today marked the first day of the Annual Conference on Cooperation and Shared Responsibility for Working and Economic Productivity, held on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> December in Vancouver, Canada, coordinated by the National Miners Union of Mexico and attended by directors and representatives of more than 45 national and multinational companies, alongside 60 local and national leaders of this important trade union. Leading international leaders and well-known lawyers from Mexico, the US and Canada are also among the distinguished conference delegates.

This is the sixth consecutive occasion that we have come together for this significant event. Just as in the five previous years, participants from the most important corporations in the mining, transport, manufacturing and steel industries will devote their time to analysing, discussing and proposing fundamental measures, plans and programmes for the future of economic activity and business development. The focus will also be on developing productive, decent employment that is fair and properly geared towards working stability, social justice, peace and a healthy and balanced economic growth for Mexico, something that is so needed at this political and social juncture.

The drive and decision to organise this event is fitting for a modern, responsible trade union like the Miners Union, because its democratic and progressive nature sets it apart from other unionised groups in Mexico, which could perhaps struggle to organise a conference on this scale. Indeed, there are perhaps very few unions worldwide that would take the step of organising a large convention like this, given the risk of being disappointed by a poor response from the corporate sector.

The topics to be discussed at the conference cover core aspects of the automotive industry, including all the challenges and opportunities facing it now and in the future. The market for the rail and aerospace industries will also be closely analysed. The current state of the iron and steel industry and its prospects for growth are among many other topics to be examined and debated. Undoubtedly, one of the most important issues to be discussed is technological development and robotisation, which presents a challenge for future generations.

Legal aspects related to the mining sector and labour reform proposals, with all their implications, will be analysed within the context of the changes that Mexico will be seeking in order to transform its labour policy into one with greater respect for the freedom of association and



fundamental workers' rights. Once and for all, this new policy should finally supersede the one that has been in place for the last six-year administration, no different from what we have seen under all the highly negative previous PAN-party governments.

It is shameful and worrying that politicians and civil servants from the Ministry of Work should be committed to serving the interests of companies, rather than respecting, defending and protecting workers.

This has been a clear betrayal of the interests of Mexico and its workers by those at the very front line of official responsibility, which they have failed to comply with by violating the principles of the Federal Labour Law and the Constitution. This is something that they will surely in time be called to account for, and when that happens there will be no one from the business world ready to step forward and protect them. The same thing will happen with those official trade unions that have put themselves forward to exploit workers through employer protection contracts, repressing rights, threats and intimidation; even crimes and murders aren't beyond them, such as the killing of the two miners last 18<sup>th</sup> November in the Media Luna mine in the town of Atzcala, Guerrero.

This was yet another act of industrial homicide that continues to go unpunished, despite the physical perpetrators of the murders having been identified and arrested. The men who died were two brothers who worked for the same Canadian firm, that owns the mine, Torex Gold Resources, and they were killed by armed gangsters from the local CTM (Confederation of Mexican Workers), who were collaborating with the company and security forces.

One of the conference's key actions will be to analyse presentations about the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and Mexico's position on violations of human rights and labour rights. Another central session will cover an in-depth discussion of equality, fairness and the rights of women in the mining, metalwork and manufacturing industries in Mexico, the United States and Canada. The agreements, conclusions and resolutions of both the union and participating companies will be presented at the closing plenary event.

The positive impact arising from this important exchange of ideas, experiences and proposals will be felt in the immediate future, given that 2018 is only a few weeks away meaning that activity planning and target and objective setting will be crucial not only for workers and the industry, but for Mexico as a whole. The country urgently needs a change of direction and a new development model designed to benefit the great majority of the population, generating greater equality and justice and serving as a clear example of structural transformation and change, if of course the next Mexican government truly does have the political will to make it happen.



# La Jornada

For now, we have the high spirits of Vancouver to push us in the right direction. This great annual conference has become one of the country's best events and a gauge for the future health and growth of our national economy.