



INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DE LA SÉCURITÉ SOCIALE
ASOCIACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE LA SEGURIDAD SOCIAL
INTERNATIONALE VEREINIGUNG FÜR SOZIALE SICHERHEIT

**Regional Social Security Forum for the Americas
Opening Address of Ms Corazon de la Paz-Bernardo
President of the International Social Security Association
Brasilia, 24 May 2010**

Your Excellency, the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil,

Señor Carlos Eduardo Gabas, Minister of Social Security

Señora Maria Helena Carvalho Lopes, Minister of Social Development and Fight against Hunger

Distinguished guests, **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is indeed a privilege for me to be here today and to welcome you all on this historic occasion, the first Regional Social Security Forum organized by the International Social Security Association in the Americas. The high level of attendance at this event is evidence that social security and the challenges confronting it are at the forefront of priorities in this region, which is a most auspicious beginning to this Forum.

Your Excellency,

May I say at the outset that we are very honored by your presence at this opening ceremony. Through this very significant gesture, you have demonstrated to the ISSA member organizations throughout the region the importance that the Government of Brazil places on the development of social security for the entire population of your country. Indeed, the actions of the Brazilian authorities to extend social protection are upheld as a model for many around the world.

**Your Excellency,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to express, on behalf of the International Social Security Association, our sincerest gratitude to you and to your government for having generously agreed to host this event in Brasilia. And our very special congratulations and thanks to the Ministry of Social Insurance, the National Institute of Social Security and the members of the National Organizing Committee for the preparation of this first Regional Social Security Forum for the Americas. It is a powerful symbol indeed that we meet here in a country that has experienced so much positive and creative development in social security in recent years.

This Regional Social Security Forum has a very special significance for the ISSA since it is the first of a new model of events to be held in the Americas. Previous Regional Forums had been held in each of the world regions: in Kigali, Rwanda for the region of Africa in 2008; in Manila, the Philippines, my home country, for the region of Asia and the Pacific in 2009; and in Warsaw, Poland earlier this year for Europe.

We had planned on coming to the Americas for this regional Forum in May, and, then, November 2009 but it was not to be. H1 N1 intervened.

The Regional Forum represents an important milestone on the way to the World Social Security Forum later this year, which will gather over 1,000 social security leaders and administrators from throughout the world. Mark your calendars! The *rendez-vous* is in Cape Town, South Africa, from 29 November to 4 December 2010.

**Your Excellency,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Our agenda during the coming days will focus on the challenges and opportunities for dynamic social security in a very diverse region. As a framework for the discussions during the next three days, the ISSA has prepared a report on **the developments and trends of social security in the Americas**. Through an analysis of what has been happening in the field of social security in this region, the ISSA Secretary General will highlight how schemes in the Americas have responded to new demands and challenges facing the region. After all, this region has a long-standing tradition of dynamism in social security. This tradition gives inspiration to much of what the ISSA refers to as Dynamic Social Security

Our discussions will then concentrate on three areas of particular importance for this region:

Firstly, the centrality of **good governance of social security institutions** as a condition for high-performing social security institutions and a driver of citizen-oriented services, in a context of growing public and policy demands.

Secondly, the importance of **socially-inclusive and financially sustainable pension reforms**, in a region which has seen some profound changes in the institutional framework of pensions schemes, and which shares the same demographic challenges as other parts of the world.

Thirdly, the fundamental importance of the extension of **social security coverage** considering significant disparities across the region, and growing informal sector employment and migration, where traditional contributory schemes may in some cases no longer be adequate.

Finally, this Forum will close with the first **Social Security Summit** for the Americas at which policy-makers and representatives of international organizations will debate the key role of social security in facing future socio-economic challenges in this region.

**Your Excellency,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Your participation at this Regional Forum underlines that you share our view that dynamic social security has a central role to play in shaping the future of this region, where it also has a long and important history. As you may recollect, dynamic social security calls for sustainable and accessible social security systems that are based on innovative, integrated and preventative responses. It is significant to recall that the term “social security” was first coined in the United States, and that Latin American social security schemes have been involved in the ISSA for more than 70 years since the National Social Security Fund of Peru became ISSA’s first non-European member in 1938. This is also the region that has experienced some of the most pioneering developments and radical reforms of social security. You, the representatives of social security administrations from this region have much to share with other parts of the world. It is also good to acknowledge that the United States Social Security Administration has been publishing the global research survey *Social Security Programs throughout the World* since 1937.

The diverse ISSA membership in the region spans 31 countries in North, Central and South America and the Caribbean. The presence and services of the ISSA have been strengthened in the last two years, with the opening of Liaison Offices for the Andean countries and the Southern Cone, and plans for a new office for Central and North America in Mexico and a Focal Point located in Brazil, for Brazil and for other Portuguese-speaking countries. The ISSA enjoys close collaboration with other regional and international organizations involved in the development of social security in the region, in particular the CISS (Inter-American Conference on Social Security) and the OISS (Ibero-American Social Security Organization), as well as the ILO (International Labour Organization), manifested most recently in the joint Guatemala Declaration, which calls for a renewed culture of social security.

The Forum takes place in Latin America where important and serious deficits and inadequacies as regards social protection prevail. The issues are well-known to all of us – lack of coverage, benefit inadequacy, growing informality – to name but a few - but they are an everyday reality for millions of people in the region. And now, the region must continue to deal with the global financial and economic crisis. Having said this, it is also important to recognize the important achievements that you have made over the recent years in spite of various social, economic and political challenges.

This financial and economic crisis and its impact on the lives of people has reaffirmed the essential role of social security and the contribution of social protection to social cohesion, human capital investment and a healthy workforce. The people of this region are looking to you to rise to these challenges and respond with vigour.

I am therefore confident that forward-looking social security administrations in this region can, in this challenging context, continue to innovate and develop a responsive, proactive social security, and thereby contribute to achieving social and economic progress in the Americas.

My confidence stems from our analysis that many social security institutions have introduced diverse, creative and interesting new approaches to social security administration and operations. The results of the Good Practice Award for the Americas, and particularly the winning entries from Brazil and Mexico, which we will recognize tomorrow, attest to the vitality of our institutions throughout the region.

**Your Excellency,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This first Regional Social Security Forum for the Americas will provide invaluable opportunities for interaction, exchange and sharing – of information, experiences, new challenges and new thinking.

I sincerely hope that later this week you will return to your countries with new ideas and new encouragement to strive towards excellence in social security administration. The ISSA is committed to working with you, and to send a clear message to decision-makers in this region that social security is essential to economic and social progress.

Let me conclude by wishing us all the greatest success for this Regional Social Security Forum and by thanking once again Your Excellency, the Brazilian government and the ISSA member organizations in Brazil for the generous hospitality and excellent organization that has enabled this unique regional event to take place.

Thank you.