

## **Joint Statement of the Labor Affairs Council of the United States – Panama Trade Promotion Agreement**

Panama City, Panama  
January 28, 2014

The Labor Affairs Council (the Council) of the United States – Panama Trade Promotion Agreement (TPA) convened its first meeting on January 27-28, 2014, in Panama City, Panama. Pursuant to Article 16.5 of the TPA, the Council is responsible for overseeing the implementation of Chapter 16 (the Labor Chapter) of the TPA, including reviewing each Party's progress under the chapter. The Council comprises senior officials from the labor ministries and other appropriate agencies or ministries. Officials from the U.S. Department of Labor, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of Panama participated in the first Council meeting.

During the meeting, the Council reaffirmed the Parties' commitments under the Labor Chapter, including the commitment to adopt and maintain in law and practice the rights as stated in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The Council further clarified the domestic mechanisms, institutions, and procedures that each Party has established to advance the implementation of the Labor Chapter's provisions. The Council also held in-depth discussions on several topics, including: (1) activities to strengthen institutional capacity and labor law enforcement and compliance; (2) child labor and youth employment; and (3) areas of common interest, such as the use of temporary contracts, the process for union registration, and the promotion of tripartite social dialogue. The Parties committed to remain engaged on a regular and continuing basis to vigorously address the challenges that remain to ensuring full implementation of the Labor Chapter.

At the conclusion of the Council meeting the morning of January 28, the Parties convened a public session with workers, employers, civil society organizations, and the general public to discuss matters relating to the implementation of the Labor Chapter. The Parties recognize that convening a public session helps foster greater transparency in the administration of the Labor Chapter and furthers the successful implementation of the Labor Chapter's obligations.