

# *Mexico announces agreement to create 20,000 jobs in Honduras*

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Mexico City, July 29 (RHC)-- Mexico will help to establish the employment programs "Sowing Lives" and "Youth Building the Future" in Honduras to create 20,000 jobs between July and the end of this year, the leaders of both nations pledged Saturday in Mexico's eastern Veracruz state.

"The initiative carries legitimate goals of development and prosperity," said Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez, urging banks, international organizations and nations to support the project.

"I suggest that shortly we call for the formation of a large-scale international coalition for massive employment generation in the Northern Triangle of Central America (Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala)," he added.

Hernandez also recalled that around five percent of the Honduran economy is based on coffee cultivation, but 90 percent of the people employed are small producers who receive less than two cents for each cup of coffee, which could cost up to \$5 USD in a city like New York.

"If we manage to take genetic high-productivity material, use cutting-edge technology to add more value to the coffee producer's work, we would be doing an act of tremendous social justice," the Honduran head of state said.

Meanwhile, Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador replied with the promise to help Honduras in improving coffee production in all the possible ways. "Mexico and Honduras are sending the message that if both countries can cooperate in such a way, so why can't the United States or the developed countries do the same?" Mexican Foreign Secretary, Marcelo Ebrard said Saturday in a speech during the agreement signing.

The agreement is part of the Integral Development Plan for Central America. The program is a strategy promoted by Mexico to reduce migration in the region, by raising standards of living and improving socio-economic indicators in the region. It's also Mexico's bid to intermedate between the Trump administration and Central America to regain leadership in the region since leading peacemaking processes in the 1990s.

"People migrate out of necessity, due to lack of work opportunities or violence and we must address those causes, we must go to the origin of what is causing this migratory phenomenon", Obrador had said, about two months ago at the presentation of the plan, adding that now "it's time to convince the United States to make this project a reality."

Back in December 2018, the U.S. government pledged \$5.8 billion in aid and investment for strengthening government and economic development in Central America and another US\$4.8 billion in development aid for southern Mexico.

The region is one of the most violent in the world, with great inequality, as the population with more income in the region earns up to 70 times more than the poorest strata. Despite it, countries show high demographic growth, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras add up to 33 million people. Yet its young people can't integrate into the labor force, as 362,000 are incorporated each year but only 127,000 jobs are created in general.

For this reason, the Mexican-led program was based on 30 public policy recommendations framed in four programmatic areas: migration, economy and trade, social programs and sustainable development. In June, it was reported that AMLO's government will also invest US\$30 million in El Salvador to implement the same "Sowing Lives" program

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