

Peru Workers Rally Against APEC with Alternative Forum



Lima, November 19 (RHC)-- As the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum, or APEC, gets underway in Lima, elsewhere in the Peruvian capital, labor unions gathered in protest as the Peruvian General Confederation of Workers hosts a conference on workers rights in critique of the business-oriented forum.

Peruvian President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski held a meeting at the opening of the APEC forum with the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the 21 participating countries. "The objective of APEC is to strengthen free trade among the countries, promote investment, and especially employment," Kuczynski told the foreign ministers of the 21 participating countries.

APEC started with a presentation by PricewaterhouseCoopers, PwC, one of the world's biggest consulting firms in the world, about what business leaders are looking for in order to invest in a country. One of the advantages for attracting investment to Peru, according to PwC, are the country's relatively low taxes while an obstacle is the high labor costs in the country. "In Peru, we can take advantage of the fact that we have a favorable tax system," said Orlando Marchesi, a senior partner of PwC in Peru.

"We're not very competitive in labor costs," he added, pointing to new legislation by the government that could make the South American country more "competitive." However, the alternative conference, which includes around 500 labor leaders from around the country, blasted APEC for being too top-down.

One labor leader, Juan Jose Gorriti, said that “any international treaty or event ... should include the opinion of the people and the workers so they’re informed and because the decisions taken ultimately affect the people.”

The workers also rejected the proposals to cut labor costs. “There isn’t going to be any development as long as we workers have our rights and access to benefits cut,” said Cesar Soberón, another labor leader.

“Before, we opposed the proposed youth labor law, which tried to cut benefits and rights for young workers, because it reflected the increasing precariousness of employment,” he added.

APEC will continue until November 20 with U.S. President Barack Obama, Russian President Vladimir Putin and China’s President Xi Jinping all in attendance, among many others.

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