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Contact: Whitney Simon, Program Officer  
202-898-9057  
wsimon@globalfairness.org

***Global Fairness Initiative, Guatemalan Government promote competitiveness through improved labor rights - National Workshop addresses labor rights, employment, and economic competitiveness.***

Washington D.C., July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008-- As part of its groundbreaking USG-funded Central American Labor Rights Enhancement Project (CALREP), the Global Fairness Initiative (GFI) in partnership with the Government of Guatemala hosted the National Labor Rights, Employment and Competitiveness Workshop on July 1 in Guatemala City.

The Vice President of Guatemala, speaking at the gathering, stated that the Guatemalan Government is committed to playing the role of mediator between workers and employers to strengthen enforcement of labor laws and to promote productivity. The Vice President emphasized that coordinated efforts can help reach President Colom's election campaign promise of creating 700,000 new jobs over the next four years.

Other participants, in addition to Guatemalan and U.S. government officials, representatives from GAP, Inc. and Columbia Sportswear along with others from international textile and apparel companies, Guatemalan labor unions, employer associations, and civil society organizations.

Minister Rodriguez stated that "the multi-stakeholder process—a process that engages employers, workers, and government—has helped Guatemala make significant advances in its labor environment." U.S. Ambassador in Guatemala, James Derham, also noted that "International cooperation is helping to reduce unemployment rates in Guatemala."

GFI Executive Director Stan Byers stated, "The presentations, roundtables and robust discussions took on both difficult and controversial issues, including corporate and union responsibility, occupational safety and health, employment generation and social justice."

This historic national gathering brought together Guatemalan government officials, local labor unions, employer representatives, international textile and apparel brands and civil society organizations to discuss the country's commitment to improving labor compliance and to explore strategies to meet the country's challenges to ensure an improved investment climate and increased employment opportunities for Guatemalan citizens.

The diverse participants concluded that Guatemala could overcome its significant security and income inequality challenges and fulfill its need for increased economic growth only if it continued to engage in a process that resulted in collaborative solutions to improve labor compliance.

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NOTE: To learn more about The Global Fairness Initiative, please visit [www.globalfairness.org](http://www.globalfairness.org) or contact [wsimon@globalfairness.org](mailto:wsimon@globalfairness.org).

*Founded in 2002, the Global Fairness Initiative (GFI) aims to change the global poverty cycle and enable market-based solutions in the agriculture and textiles sectors that directly benefit the world's poorest workers and producers. With the belief that equal economic opportunity for the poor and marginalized promotes stability and security for all, and that the sustainability of our globalized world is dependent on a fair distribution of its benefits and challenges, GFI blends the best of locally-based solutions for high engagement in a competitive global marketplace.*