Statement from Martha Herrera, Director of Communications and Social Responsibility, CEMEX

Statement from William S. Reese, President and CEO, International Youth Foundation

Statement from Angela Camacho, Microsoft Legal Corporate Affairs Director, Latin America

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**Statement from Martha Herrera, Director of Communications and Social Responsibility, CEMEX:**

I am very honored to be here, on behalf of CEMEX, in an event of such importance, teaming up with such distinguished organizations and companies.

Since its birth, 106 years ago as a local company in northern Mexico, CEMEX has taken great strategic importance to the development of its staff and members of the communities in which we operate.

For our company, dissemination and generation of knowledge are an essential input engine for innovation and social development. Therefore, it provides tools to translate that knowledge into tangible benefits for both the generation of added value to the company and the development of their employees and the community.

The main objective of the training and development programs of the company is to foster learning, the updating and the permanent development of our employees to give them access, through this way, to a better quality of life.

We are convinced that our growth as a company is necessarily linked to the progress of those who are part of the organization, their families, our neighbors, customers, suppliers and all who are part of the communities we integrate in. We believe there cannot be a successful business and in sustainable growth, in the midst of a community sidelined from that progress.
Therefore, we appreciate the opportunity to be part this effort. We are very proud to participate in this initiative that will contribute very significantly to businesses, organizations, universities, governments and society in general to perceive and most importantly to act together on the urgent need to generate opportunities for millions of young people at risk.

CEMEX is a Mexican company with operations in over 50 countries across five continents. We have an important presence in Latin America, which will allow us to provide the experience of many years of interaction with the societies of the region through different development initiatives that we have implemented in these countries, as part of the company’s global program of social responsibility.

The management capability we have developed over the years has allowed us to work together with thousands of families and people of all ages, citizens seeking to build together with us, your own destiny, through social programs implemented in alliance with authorities, organizations and other companies.

Training is one of the three axis aligned to our business strategy to which the company has devoted substantial resources, time, expertise and innovation, which has allowed, for example, that during the last ten years, CEMEX’s employees have received more than 652,000 hours of training.

We have also undertaken in Mexico and other Latin American countries, various initiatives that have allowed us to incorporate young people at risk to develop necessary skills for them to succeed.

One of these initiatives is what we call Self-Employment Production Centers, which is intended to support the productive occupation of adults, especially women and young people, and the improvement of their homes through assisted self-construction and self-employment where more than 250,000 people have participated.

In these centers, usually installed in alliance with local authorities, people receive technical training and then work in the elaboration of blocks and other prefabricated, with raw material and machinery supplied by CEMEX. As payment in-kind, they receive 50 percent of what is produced, which they can build with or improve their homes, in an assisted self-construction scheme with technical advice.

This program has allowed us to contribute in the rebuilding of the social tissue damaged by circumstances such as poverty and lack of opportunities, progress slopes that have been added, such as the promotion of values and psychological counseling, based on other alliances that we have also established with universities, other companies and government institutions.

Along with this project we have initiated the School of Construction, which emerges with a potential of 52,000 students that will develop skills that will enable them to access new opportunities for labor integration, while also teaching them the foundations for creating and managing a micro-business.

Equally, in our Community Development Centers, in conjunction with technical schools and government institutions, courses and workshops in various trades are taught to more than 200,000 young people each year.

These are just some examples of CEMEX’s efforts to promote development and opportunities for young people. Unfortunately, there is much to do still, and every day the reality is that youth is one of the most vulnerable social sectors.
We all know that, and we are here because we do not accept this reality in resignation, we are here because we are convinced that it is essential to do something about it, **but above all**, because we are convinced that this is possible and that together we will achieve the objective of supporting more than one million young people in Latin American countries.

For many years, CEMEX is committed to contribute to building a better future for all. In general, social development programs of CEMEX have benefited, in the past decade, to over 6 million people, especially young people and women in Latin America.

Today we offer NEO all this experience and the commitment to working passionately for years to come and contributing in the achievement of the objectives of this initiative. I am sure that this will be.

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**Statement from William S. Reese, President and CEO, International Youth Foundation:**

This is a truly historic announcement – responding to an equally historic opportunity to dramatically improve the lives and prospects of young people across Latin America. Young people in every community want to stay in school, get and hold decent jobs, and be productive citizens. But they need the necessary resources and support services to do so. Today, this remarkable alliance of leaders, from every sector of society, is making a solemn commitment to ensure far more of this region’s youth will be able to realize their aspirations for a better life and a brighter future. The International Youth Foundation is enormously proud to be part of this bold and exciting endeavor.

Like so many here today, IYF has been active in Latin America and the Caribbean for more than a decade, working with many of you in some 23 countries to help young people learn, work, and lead. Much of this effort has been focused on developing strong, impactful employability programs for disadvantaged youth. Through our entra21 program – a partnership with MIF and so many of you in this room, we’ve jointly developed an exceptional, comprehensive approach that offers opportunities from job training and life skills to internships and job placement services – that together have benefited over 135,000 young people over the past decade. And we know that 75% of our participants are either working or have gone back to school.

This is one of the many reasons I am so very confident and optimistic for what NEO can accomplish over the next decade. It is an initiative that is built on the foundation of programs that have already demonstrated real, positive impact in young people’s lives. We have identified the strategies and learned from our experiences – including the vital role of the private sector in the development and design of these programs. The initiatives have been tested and proven to not only meet the needs of
young people to find decent work – but also to satisfy the needs of the local industries who need skilled workers to build their businesses.

Yet as effective as many of these programs are, our challenge has always been: how do we bring these best practices to scale so that not just thousands but millions of young people can benefit and become successful employees in the 21st century workplace. Today, with the support of MIF and the corporate leaders in this room, we will finally be able to take that enormously important next step.

My final reason for optimism is that as great as the commitment that is being made here today, this is just the beginning. I strongly believe that others will recognize the enormous power of multi-sector partnerships to make dramatic improvements in the lives of our young people – and want to join the effort. I hope my optimism is well placed, for the sake of the millions of youth today who are yearning to work hard, contribute to their communities, and help lead their families and countries forward.

Microsoft

Statement from Angela Camacho, Microsoft Legal Corporate Affairs Director, Latin America:

As we look at the global economic crisis and its impact on jobs and national competitiveness, we see glaring “opportunity divide” among young people around the world – an emergent gap between those who have the access, skills, and opportunities to be successful and those who do not. Closing this opportunity divide is one of the most important actions we can all take – together – to secure the future of our youth and as a result, the social and economic development of our countries.