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## NEWS RELEASE

### **IOE HISTORY MADE AS IOE PRESIDENT-ELECT DANIEL FUNES DE RIOJA HAS AUDIENCE WITH POPE FRANCIS**

IOE President-elect Daniel Funes de Rioja made IOE history this week by being the first IOE officer to have the honour of an audience with the Pope.

In his capacity as Chair of the upcoming International Labour Conference in May/June, Daniel Funes was part of a tripartite group from Argentina that met with the pontiff in the Vatican. Underlining the role of the International Labour Organization in promoting social justice and internationally recognised human and labour rights, the group extended an invitation to Pope Francis to attend the 2014 International Labour Conference.

During the audience, Daniel Funes affirmed to his fellow countryman, who is leader of the Roman Catholic Church since 2013, the commitment of governments, employers and workers to use the 103rd Session of the Conference to address the serious issues of forced labour, and particularly human trafficking. The tripartite group also underscored its willingness to work towards transitioning the millions of workers in the informal economy to formal employment, where they will enjoy better access to safe and secure working conditions.

Daniel Funes added: "We would appreciate the participation of His Holiness at this year's International Labour Conference to shed light on some of the most serious issues of the day - forced labour and human trafficking." Argentinian labour minister Carlos Tomado expressed his conviction that "the contribution of the pontiff to the discussion on labour issues would be crucial".

Yesterday, the IOE President-elect met with Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Parolin, to whom he presented a history of the IOE, together with the Report of the ILO Governing Body on the findings of the recent high-level mission to Venezuela.

As well as spiritual leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics, Pope Francis is the head of state of the Vatican.

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*The IOE is the largest network of the private sector in the world. With more than 150 business and employer organisation members, the IOE is the global voice of business in labour and social policy at the international level.*