

Press release
Madrid, 19 March 2023

Isidro Fainé highlights the social responsibility of the bank to make a more prosperous, sustainable and equitable society a reality

The World Savings and Retail Banking Institute (WSBI) held the 2023 International Retail Banking Leaders Conference in Colombia, which brought together leaders from the retail banking sector worldwide, international bodies, credit institutions and Latin American companies

The World Savings and Retail Banking Institute (WSBI), chaired by Isidro Fainé and which counts the Spanish Confederation of Savings Banks (CECA) among its leading members, held the 2023 International Retail Banking Leaders Conference, in Cartagena de Indias (Colombia).

The occasion brought together leaders from the retail banking sector and focused on the latest global trends in financial inclusion, digitalisation and cybersecurity, as well as sustainable finance and financial education. It was an excellent opportunity to foster knowledge exchange and good practices among representatives of WSBI entities from all over the world, international bodies, credit institutions and companies from Latin America.

In his speech to the conference, Isidro Fainé, President of the WSBI, the "la Caixa" Foundation and CECA, stated: "In recent years we have seen unprecedented movements in interest rates, suffered a chain of financial crises and had to adapt to drastic reforms in the regulatory frameworks of the banking sector. We are immersed in a complex, uncertain and unstable scenario."

However, the president reassured the conference when he added: "I am optimistic about our future. We are called upon to continue to conduct banking with a profound sense of social responsibility and to make a more prosperous, sustainable and equitable society a reality. In these times of growing inequalities, our social action takes on more importance than ever. We grant priority to financial inclusion in our business model and carry out a broad agenda of social and community projects with our Obra Social".

Priorities for the coming years

The 2023 International Retail Banking Leaders Conference was held in the Colombian city of Cartagena de Indias under the heading “Global Trends on Financial Education, Cybersecurity and Sustainable Finance”. The topics addressed demonstrate the solid commitment of the WSBI and its members with the priority lines of work outlined during the last Assembly, held in 2021 in Paris and in which Isidro Fainé renewed his mandate as president of the global institution. Financial inclusion, the promotion of sustainable finance, innovation, taking advantage of digitalisation to promote proximity to the customer and reinforcing solvency in the framework of Basel IV were the priorities set for the coming years and which have been made evident in this new event.

Leading experts linked to the world of finance from different jurisdictions discussed the main topics that mark these trends in three panels: Success stories in digitalisation and cybersecurity; Sustainable finance; and Financial education as a means for financial inclusion.

The conference was opened by Peter Simon, Managing Director of WSBI-ESBG, and Diego Prieto Rivera, Regional President of WSBI for America and the Caribbean, and President of Banco Caja Social (Colombia).

The CECA sector was also represented at the meeting: José María Méndez, CEO of CECA, was moderator for the panel focussing on sustainable finance; Joan Rosás, Head of International Institutional Relations at CaixaBank, acted as moderator of the panel on financial education; Carlos Morales Roviralta, head of the CaixaBank Representation Office in Colombia, and Eugenio Solla, Chief Sustainability Officer and member of the CaixaBank Steering Committee, also took part as panellists.

Among the representatives of international bodies were Marcela Ponce Pérez, Climate Finance Programme Leader for Latin America and the Caribbean at International Finance Corporation (IFC) -which forms part of the World Bank Group-, and Clemente del Valle, member of the Sustainable Development Investment Future Council and the Infrastructure 4.0 Community group of the World Economic Forum.

CECA and the WSBI: the value of socially responsible banking

The WSBI, created in 1924, represents more than 6,400 savings and retail banks from 67 countries on the five continents, whose total assets amount to 15.6 billion dollars and who service over 1,700 million customers - almost 21% of the world’s population - offering financial services mainly to SMEs and families.

CECA, an association that brings together banks, savings banks and foundations, is an active member of the World Savings and Retail Banking Institute (WSBI) and the European Savings Banks Group (ESBG) international associations, which represent the retail banking model characterised by what is known as the three Rs, a model with which the CECA member entities feel fully identified: *retail*, focused on providing financial services for families and MSEs; *rooted* in the community, involved and committed to the development of the territories in which they operate; and *responsible*, identified with social and community projects (Obra Social) and sustainability.

CECA and the WSBI represent and defend the interests of their members, and are therefore present in multiple national and international fora. The WSBI helps savings banks and retail banks the world over prosper. It focuses on international regulatory matters that impact on the finance industry and provides a platform for knowledge exchange among member entities.

About CECA

CECA is the banking association that defends the interests of savings banks and the banks they create, and promotes the mission they carry out through their financial activity and their social and community projects (Obra Social).

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CECA member entities

Credit institutions



Foundations



Fundación Cajastur

