

Newsletter of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear colleagues:

As agreed during our Executive Committee Meeting (March 29, 2014, in Montego Bay, Jamaica), the Network of Women Parliamentarians is following up on the theme of the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the new Post-2015 Development Agenda. At the Network's last meeting (November 4, 2014, in Asunción, Paraguay), the central theme was *Women Parliamentarians of the Americas and the Post-2015 Development Agenda*. In addition to listening to presentations on this theme, we adopted the *Resolution on the 20th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. These activities paved the way for a very promising 2015 and for the commitments made in the context of a new international program.



Since then, the Network has organized training activities and conferences given by experts, and has encouraged its members to participate in a range of international events. The past 15 years have allowed us to consolidate the Network as an indispensable instrument for ensuring that women parliamentarians of the Americas are heard and that they have an increasingly important role to play.

I believe that 2015 will see further progress and mark the beginning of a new phase in achieving gender equality throughout the Americas. At the international level, the Network will continue to serve as a means for enabling us to maximize the scope of our work and continue to achieve our goals.

Diva Hadamira Gastélum

Senator of the Republic of the United Mexican States

IN THIS ISSUE

Message from the President	1
News from the Network.....	2
Executive Committee 2013-2015	7
Member's Contributions	
- Gloria Bidegain	8
- Rita de Santis.....	9
- Edipcia Dubón.....	10
- Diva Hadamira Gastélum ..	11
- Alicia V. Gutierrez.....	12



Opening of the Annual Meeting

Asunción, Paraguay, November 4 of 2014

I am pleased to note that, for their first activity of 2015, the Network members will be meeting in San Juan, the city that hosted the Network's very first Annual Meeting, in 2000, and the first workshop for women parliamentarians. It enlisted the participation of UN Women, focussed on the topic *Improving Women's Economic Rights in the Americas*, and culminated in a recommendation being adopted on the subject. The statutes that continue to govern Network proceedings today were also adopted at that time.

Published and Edited by:
Secretariat of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas of COPA

1050, rue des Parlementaires
Édifice André-Laurendeau, 4^e étage
Québec (Québec) G1A 1A3 CANADA
Telephone: 1 418 644-2888
Fax : 1 418 643-1865

NEWS FROM THE NETWORK OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING Asuncion, Paraguay November 3, 2014

The last meeting of the Executive Committee of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas was held during the XIII General Assembly of the COPA and the XII Annual Meeting of the Network in Asuncion, Paraguay, on November 3 of 2014.

To start the meeting, the President, Senator Diva Gastélum Bajo, thanked Senator Zulma Gómez for organizing this meeting in Asunción, Paraguay, and acknowledged the presence of a new Committee member, Québec National Assembly MNA Rita de Santis, representing the Network's Secretariat. Other members that were present were Regional Representative for the Southern Cone, Deputy Alicia Gutiérrez, Regional Representative for the Caribbean, MP Sharon Ffolkes Abrahams, Regional Representative for the Caribbean and Deputy Maria Caridad Rubio (replacing Deputy Aixa Hevia González).



Work of the Annual Meeting of the Network of Women Parliamentarians, Asuncion, November 4 of 2014

In addition to establishing quorum and adopting the agenda, the members approved the following list of observers, in accordance with section 13 of the statutes: Deputy of the Argentine Chamber of Deputies, Ana Carolina Gaillard, Deputy of the Congress of the State of Nuevo León, Mexico, Imelda Alejandro de la Garza, Québec National Assembly, MNA Carole Poirier, Network Secretary for the Argentine National Congress delegation, Isabel Chiamonte. The list of observers for the Annual Meeting of the next day was also approved: Women's Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic of Paraguay, Ministry of Women, Gender Secretariat of the Supreme Court of Justice of Paraguay, Women in Politics Network of Paraguay, Paraguayan Network of Women Municipal Leaders, Women's Parliament, Paraguayan Network Against All Forms of Discrimination, Amnesty International and UN Women.



Presentation by the President and discussion with participants during Annual Meeting

(Continued on next page)



The participants at the Annual Meeting of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, November 4, Asuncion, Paraguay

The minutes of the last Executive Committee Meeting, held in Montego Bay, Jamaica, in March 2014, and the agenda of the Annual Meeting to be held the following day were adopted without any changes.

Afterwards, MNAs Rita de Santis and Carole Poirier then presented the draft resolution on the 20th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. MNA Poirier was the initiator of the Seminar on the 20th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which was held in Québec City in January 2014 and attended by parliamentarians from all over the world. The Québec Declaration, adopted on this occasion, was supported worldwide and was mentioned at the Summit of La Francophonie in Dakar, Senegal, in November 2014. MNA Poirier pointed out that the reports filed by the different countries in the context of the process to assess the commitments made in Beijing 20 years ago (Beijing+20) showed that proportionally less progress had been made than at the last assessment, and that it was deemed important that it be the women themselves that act on the commitments. The resolution presented to the Network called for women parliamentarians of the Americas to take a stand and also adopt the Québec Declaration on the 20th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The President indicated that she agreed with adopting the resolution, which reiterates the Québec Declaration on the 20th Anniversary of the Beijing

Declaration and Platform for Action. The other parliamentarians also agreed that the resolution should be presented without changes at the Annual Meeting the following day. Besides that, the President stated that, as agreed, the Senate of Mexico had prepared a very comprehensive report giving an overview of the Convention of Belém do Pará, the Millennium Development Goals, the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Platform for Action Beijing+20. (Continued on next page)

Presence of women in Parliaments

According to the Interparliamentary Union (IPU)/UN Women map of *Women in Politics 2015* and the IPU's *Women in Parliament: 20 years Review*, women's political participation has made progress over the years, but just not enough and not at a fast enough pace. In the Americas region, the share of women in parliaments more than doubled between 1995 and 2015, reaching an average of 26,4 per cent and registering the greatest progress among all regions over the past 20 years.

For more details: <http://ipu.org/english/home.htm>

Also, a discussion began on the other themes slated for study in the Work Plan.

First of all, the President stressed the importance of the theme "Women's sexual and reproductive rights", including the rights of girls. She reminded those in attendance that in Mexico, many girls between the ages of 8 and 14 find themselves pregnant and that sex education is essential. She pointed out that in the District of Mexico City, abortion has been decriminalized, but that there is still widespread ignorance on the subject as well as a lack of means to deal with it. Deputy Gutierrez underlined the importance of including, under this theme, a discussion on the subject of unsafe abortions and preventing further abortion-related deaths. Deputy Ana Carolina Gaillard mentioned how important it is for Argentina to legalize abortion. Deputies Alicia Gutierrez and Maria Caridad Rubio agreed to work together on this theme and to send members a questionnaire to collect data.

Then, MP Sharon Ffolkes Abraham indicated that she would continue studying the theme "The impacts of climate change on women" and pointed out that, to establish a more representative picture of the situation, it would be interesting to have contributions from the representatives of Mexico, Central America, Québec and South America, in addition to the Caribbean.

Besides, Senator Gastélum indicated that general legislation on the protection of the rights of children and adolescents was about to be passed in the Senate of Mexico. She stressed that the situation is currently very difficult for children and young teenagers, in particular unaccompanied migrant children who find themselves penniless at the US border. Given the urgency of the situation, she deemed it important to discuss this theme so that parliamentary diplomacy makes concrete action possible. As a result, it was proposed that a comparative study be carried out on existing legislation governing migration in the Americas, including the situation of migrant women and unaccompanied migrant children. Deputies Ana Carolina Gaillard and Imelda Alejandro de la Garza agreed to work on this theme. The President noted that the Senate of Mexico could support a comparative study that includes 10 countries.

The meeting continued with the presentation of the book *Panorama General de la "Convención de Belem Do Pará", Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio*,

Agenda Post 2015 y Plataforma de Acción Beijing +20 (Overview of the Belem Do Pará Convention, Millennium Development Goals, Post-2015 Development Agenda and Beijing+20 Platform for Action) published by the Senate of Mexico. She mentioned that a brochure on political reform in Mexico had been produced, as well as a table of indicators on women's sexual and reproductive rights. Both documents would be distributed the following day at the Annual Meeting.

The meeting ended with a suggestion of the President that each representative in attendance contact parliamentarians from a country that was not represented, for instance, Belize, Honduras, the United States, Uruguay, and federated states, such as Monterrey or Coahuila (Mexico). She pointed out that all Executive Committee members should get involved so as to consolidate the Network and raise the level of participation in its activities, particularly among the members who were usually absent.

Upcoming Events

- ✓ "Reinforcing the Actions of Women in Politics on all Five Continents"
→ **June, 2015, Brasilia, Brazil**
- ✓ Annual session of the Executive Board of UN-Women
→ **30 June - 3 July, 2015, New York, United States**
- ✓ Hemispheric Forum Belem do Para +20: "Good practices in prevention, treatment and punishment of violence against women"
→ **June or July 2015, Brazilia, Brazil**
- ✓ 12th meeting of the Committee of Experts of the MESECVI
→ **September 2015**

★★★★★★★★

12th ANNUAL MEETING
Asunción, Paraguay
November 4, 2014



President of COPA, Mrs Zulma Gómez Cáceres, and the President of the Network, with members of the delegation from Paraguay

The last Annual Meeting of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas was held in Asunción, Paraguay on November 4, 2014. The meeting's approximately 60 participants came from Argentina, Québec, Cuba, El Salvador, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, Panama, Puerto Rico and Haiti.

The meeting began with a word of welcome from the COPA President, Senator Zulma Ramona Gómez Cáceres, during which she emphasized that both men and women must work and fight together for women's and girls' rights. She added that without women's full participation and inclusion, we will not be able to find sustainable solutions to today's many challenges, such as climate change, political and economic stability, and eradication of poverty. The Network President then thanked Senator Gomez for organizing and hosting this event, and voiced her appreciation to the Network's Executive Committee: MNA Rita de Santis, Deputy Maria Caridad Rubio, Deputy Alicia Gutierrez and MP Sharon Ffolkes. She ended her opening remarks by expressing the hope that, in addition to being a platform for discussing progress and interesting initiatives in each country of the Americas, COPA can help achieve tangible results.

Once the agenda was adopted, work began on the main theme, *Women parliamentarians of the Americas and the Post-2015 Development Agenda*. The Network President Senator Gastélum presented the book the Senate of Mexico had worked on in recent months, "Panorama General de la "Convención de Belem Do Pará", Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio, Agenda Post 2015 y Plataforma de Acción Beijing +20" (*Overview of the Belem DoPará Convention, Millennium Development Goal, Post-2015 Agenda and Beijing+20 Platform for Action*). The publication analyzed each of the countries endorsing these key international instruments to show the progress made and the inequalities that persist. She pointed out that the Network had participated in preparing the post-2015 objectives in New York City and in many events relating to the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Following this, Deputy Garcia provided an overview of women's rights in Paraguay highlighting progress made, in particular through the creation, one year ago, of a government department for women and adoption of the National Plan for Sexual and Reproductive Health. She also mentioned the importance of formulating new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and indicators reflecting a horizontal gender-based approach. MNA de Santis reported on the Interparliamentary Seminar on Beijing+20, a far-reaching event that took place in Québec City on January 21–22, 2014, and was attended by ➔

more than 80 delegates from Africa, the Americas, Europe and Asia. The Seminar focused on three work themes: violence against women, women's economic empowerment, and women's access to political and economic decision-making processes. The Québec Declaration was adopted at the end of the Seminar. MNA de Santis then mentioned the follow-up carried out to disseminate the Declaration, in particular throughout La Francophonie and to UN Women. She proposed that the members adopt a resolution on the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in order to take a stand like the Réseau des femmes de la Francophonie and other parliamentarians throughout the world. MNA Carole Poirier, the Seminar's initiator presented the resolution, which was unanimously adopted.

The President of the Network then tabled her activity report, drawing particular attention to actions she and the Executive Committee took in the past year to consolidate the Network, including the different international conferences she attended to represent the Network and the important seminar held in Québec City in January. The Network Secretariat report was also tabled, and spotlighted the efforts made to increase the level of participation in Network activities.

During the meeting, preliminary reports on the work themes currently being studied were presented. MP Ffolkes Abrahams presented the initial data she has collected on the impacts of climate change already being felt in many environmental and economic spheres. She explained that Jamaica is one of the first countries to have created a government department to deal specifically with climate change. Deputy Alicia Gutierrez presented her preliminary report on women's sexual and reproductive rights and maternal mortality. To gather more data, she had decided to work with Deputy Maria Caridad Rubio to prepare a questionnaire for members. She also indicated that a directory had been compiled of the current situation regarding decriminalizing abortion in countries in the Americas and invited members to help enrich the data available on this subject. Finally, the Network President mentioned the progress made in democratic gender parity in Mexico, where constitutional reform has allowed a political electoral reform that now establishes a 50/50 distribution of elected seats between men and women. A brochure was produced and distributed to those present to permit best practices to be shared with other countries. As Senator of the Chamber of Senators of Paraguay and first woman president of the Colorado Party, Senator Lilian Samaniego continued with a presentation on three main elements that require improvement for greater leadership by women of the Americas: that women have the right to vote, the opportunity to participate in political parties,

and greater representation within governments, legislative bodies and municipalities.

To follow-up on the Executive Committee Meeting, Senator Gastélum presented the task assignment for 2014–2015: the theme "Comparative study on legislation governing migration in the Americas and the situation of migrant women and unaccompanied migrant children" will be analyzed by Deputy Ana Carolina Gaillard (Chamber of Deputies of the Argentine Republic) and Deputy Imelda Alejandro de la Garza (Congress of the State of Nuevo León, Mexico); the theme "Women's sexual and reproductive rights" by Deputy Alicia Verónica Gutierrez (Province of Santa Fe, Argentina) and Chair of the COPA Committee on Health and Social Protection, Deputy Maria Caridad Rubio; and, lastly, the theme "The impacts of climate change on women" by MP Sharon Ffolkes Abraham (Parliament of Jamaica).

Finally, the Network President presented the map of statistics and indicators prepared by the Senate of Mexico for distribution to all COPA member countries. The map includes the number of seats held by women, the human development index and statistics on maternal mortality.

The meeting ended with two addresses. Senator Chico Herrera spoke about the importance of having women actively participate in politics in a modern, democratic State. He described the current situation and also underlined the progress made in many countries, such as Argentina, Brazil and Chile, where women hold the office of president. However, he added that even though some reforms show that progress is being made, for instance the reform in Mexico, which requires 50% of the legislative seats to be filled by women, a lot remains to be done, and men and women must continue to work together. Then, Paraguayan Senator José Manuel Bóveda paid tribute to the women of Paraguay for their role in the progress made in this country's development.

2013-2015 NETWORK'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



Presidenta / President / Presidente / Présidente

Sra. Diva Hadamira Gastélum Bajo, Senadora
Cámara de Senadores de la Unión de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos

REPRESENTANTES REGIONALES / REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES REPRESENTANTES REGIONAIS / REPRÉSENTANTES RÉGIONALES



**América del Norte / North America / América do Norte /
Amérique du Nord**

Sra. Hilda Flores Escalera, Senadora
Cámara de Senadores de la Unión de los Estados Unidos
Mexicanos



**Cono Sur / Southern Cone / Cone Sul / Cône
Sud**

Sra. Alicia Verónica Gutiérrez, Diputada
Cámara de Diputados de la Provincia de Santa
Fe, Argentina



El Caribe / Caribbean / O Caribe / Antilles

Sra. Aixa Hevia González, Diputada
Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular de Cuba



**Asamblea fundadora de la Red y sede de la Secretaría /
Founding Assembly of the Network and host institution of
the Secretariat / Assembléia fundadora da Rede e sede da
Secretaria /
Assemblée fondatrice du Réseau et hôte du Secrétariat**

**Mme Rita de Santis, Députée
Assemblée nationale du Québec**



El Caribe / Caribbean / O Caribe / Antilles

Mrs. Sharon Ffolkes Abrahams, Member of Parliament
Parliament of Jamaica

MEMBER'S CONTRIBUTION



GLORIA BIDEGAIN

National Deputy of the Argentine Republic

REFLECTIONS ON THE REFORM OF THE CIVIL AND COMMERCIAL CODE OF THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC

In 2014, as a National Deputy, I had the honour of participating in the sitting in which the new Argentine Civil and Commercial Code was assented to. This Code is among the world's most advanced, modern normative frameworks in the field of private law.

Launched in 2011 by Executive Order 191, this initiative involved creating a committee to develop draft legislation to reform, modernize and unify the country's civil and commercial codes. With this project, the Government undertook an unprecedented transformation of the laws that govern our lives—from conception to death.

The draft bill was drawn up by a committee of experienced legal experts, who compiled the judicial records for more than 80 years of reform proposals. The bill was then submitted to the National Congress, which ordered the creation of an integrated bicameral committee of senators and deputies whose percentage composition reflected political representation. The committee set up a program to disseminate the bill and called on various sectors of the population (including university, professional, religious, business, human rights advocacy and consumer protection groups) to participate in the parliamentary process. Hundreds of legal experts took part, presenting more than 1,000 briefs. Debates were held across the country as well as in both chambers.

The new legislative provisions replace a conservative Code written in the late 19th century by Argentine legal expert Dalmacio Vélez Sarsfield.

The new Code represents a major innovation, since it is based on international treaties (in particular the human rights treaty), and its provisions are centred on human beings and dignity. The Code creates a community of principles between the national Constitution, public law and private law, as has been widely called for by Argentine legal doctrine.

The Code's 2,671 articles are designed to respond to the complex daily problems of our people and time, reinforcing the rights of historically neglected, forgotten social groups (such as Native communities) and simplifying the procedures governing marriage, divorce, adoption, *in vitro* fertilisation and commercial companies (sole proprietorships), among others.

This new standard was built collectively, and, like all human creations, is imperfect. However, it is based on a majority consensus. The Code requires us to continue to adopt appropriate legal tools to meet the current and future needs of all Argentines.

In this spirit, allow me to cite the eminent French legal scholar Portalis' *Preliminary Address on the First Draft of the Civil Code*:

"For these laws, once drafted, remain as written. Men, on the other hand, never rest. They are always moving; and this movement, which never ceases and whose effects are variously modified by circumstances, continually produces some new fact, some new outcome.

Many things are therefore necessarily left to the authority of custom, to the discussion of learned men, to the arbitration of judges. "

Original text in Spanish



RITA LC DE SANTIS

Member of the National Assembly of Québec

Representative of the Secretariat of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas

GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS (GBA)

Although decisions taken by society's decision-making authorities may be gender-neutral in appearance, they can generate inequalities due to gender-specific realities and needs.

Gender-based analysis (GBA), an analytical process that allows decisions' implications for men and women to be considered, aims to promote true gender equality by taking these specific realities and needs into account and proposing measures that may differ but that are designed to reduce gender disparities.¹

GBA can be carried out during different phases of a project—development, implementation, assessment and follow-up—and used in developing laws, regulations or measures and implementing specific programs. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) proposes a five-step gender-based analysis process for drafting legislation. These steps include assessing the purpose, scope and operation of proposed legislation; measuring the impact of proposed legislation; questions regarding specific legal aspects of proposed legislation; questions regarding administration, costs, regulations and public education; and self-assessment.²

In 1995, the States attending the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women recognized the need to apply a gender-sensitive form of analysis. Since 1997, the Québec government has been working to integrate GBA into its practices and administrative culture. Between 1997 and 2004, a number of

government departments and public bodies set up pilot projects to test the process, and, in 2006, the gender-equality policy “Turning Equality in Law into Equality in Fact” was launched, formally integrating GBA as a governance tool. The Secrétariat à la condition féminine (Secretariat for the status of women) is responsible for implementing GBA in government practices and has developed various instruments to help it do so. In addition, the government adopted action plans for 2007-2010 and 2011-2015. The latter plan provides for setting up a GBA-related accountability system and carrying out an impact assessment. Once the action plan has been fully implemented, it will be possible to prepare a summary and assess the progress made.

Over the coming years, GBA processes will continue to be improved in Québec. Nearly a decade after being implemented, we can say that GBA constitutes a governance tool that is vital to Québec's gender-equality strategy. According to the IPU, there is a growing world trend toward introducing gender-equality legislation, whose provisions implement gender-based analysis.³ Factors that parliamentarians in all regions can look to for assistance in adopting such instruments are ruling party support and the number of women parliamentarians.

GBA development is ongoing in Québec. Adopting this method would undoubtedly enable other parliaments of the Americas to approach greater gender mainstreaming, ensuring that men and women enjoy equal conditions that allow them to fully exercise their rights, exploit their potential and contribute to their country's political, economic, social and cultural development.

Original text in French

1. Secrétariat à la condition féminine, *Definition of GBA (French only)*, <http://www.scf.gouv.qc.ca/index.php?id=29> (Page consulted on March 3, 2015).
2. Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), *Gender-Sensitive Parliaments, A Global Review of Good Practice*, Document No. 65-2011, p. 32.

3. Inter-Parliamentary Union, *op. cit.*, p. 29.



EDIPCIA DUBÓN

Member of the National Assembly of Nicaragua

FROM MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES: WE STILL HAVE WORK TO DO

In the year 2000, we welcomed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) initiative. We expected the global community would mobilize to tackle humanity's biggest problems and achieve the MDGs by 2015 by, for instance, reducing extreme poverty, halting the spread of AIDS and guaranteeing access to primary education. So here we are in 2015 – what now?

In addition to this global thrust, efforts are needed on the national and regional levels for a better harmonization of policies, plans, programs and legislation...

Today, countries and development agencies around the world still accept the MDGs as a model. But although the program has helped focus development policies in a multidimensional perspective, the complexity of the themes and the lack of a unified will to address them have impeded attainment of the proposed targets.

The time has come to conclude the MDG policy cycle so we can start a new process that will redefine the program within a global framework and include the main economic, social and environmental rights, as well as peace and security.

All these themes are covered in a “zero draft” document which includes 17 objectives and 169 targets. The document has been presented to the General Assembly as a starting point for negotiations to develop the definitive version, by September 2015, of what will then be known as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, experts have qualified the draft as a

declaratory proposal, weakened by the absence of deadlines and quantifiable targets. Although the draft is a major milestone toward a world pact on development, it does not define any effective means of fighting the ills that afflict humankind.

The challenge will be to draft a more concise and concrete proposal that allows for real tracking of progress and melds collective hopes, convincing arguments, encouraging horizons, moral clarity and strategic sense, as suggested by Professor Sanahuja in the annual publication *Focos de tensión, cambio geopolítico y agenda global*.

In addition to this global thrust, efforts are needed on the national and regional levels for a better harmonization of policies, plans, programs and legislation to create concrete strategies to effectively alleviate the vulnerabilities of our populations. In our role as women parliamentarians, we must make an agreement, a pact, an alliance to reinforce and drive efforts within our countries in order to build a visible, palpable momentum.

Our job is to orient development toward sustainability, but that also requires a sustained, organized effort. Analysis and proposals alone are not enough: it is time to take action, and it is up to us to do it.

Original text in Spanish



DIVA HADAMIRA GASTÉLUM

Senator

Republic of the United Mexican States

President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas

TWENTY YEARS AFTER THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION: THE SITUATION IN MEXICO

The Beijing Platform for Action was the starting point for the concrete action that continues to influence and guide public policies promoting gender equality, and a turning point in the fight for women's rights. The Platform defined 12 critical areas of concern—poverty, education and training, health, armed conflict, the economy, empowerment, institutional mechanisms, human rights, the media, the environment and the girl child—and proposed concrete measures to be implemented at the national and international levels. Twenty years later, the Platform's strategic objectives have, among other things, highlighted the need to promote the alliance between women in government and women in civil society.

The Platform has consolidated elements of key importance in our struggle, including mechanisms for the advancement of women who, in Mexico, are represented by the Women's National Institute (INMUJERES) and local institutions. It has also highlighted the need to target the strategic areas mentioned above, including women's political participation.

In this respect, there have been achievements worth celebrating; women's participation in the legislative arena has definitely increased. Today, in Mexico, women make up 37.4% of the Lower House and 34.4% of the Senate—the fifth highest proportion in the region. Based on the 2014 Constitutional Reform on political-electoral matters, headed by President Enrique Peña Nieto, we are convinced that their numbers will continue to grow. Today, gender parity in the number of candidates for positions in the legislature is a reality for Mexican women, due, in large part, to legislative efforts and the influence of many women and important national political allies.

One of our greatest challenges is to increase women's participation at the municipal level which, in Mexico, is currently approximately 7%. In addition, only six women have become governors of federal entities. Where foreign policy is concerned, a mere 11.4% of Mexico's embassies are headed by women, whereas the proportion in our consulates is 19.4%. These are the important issues still pending with respect to women's participation in national politics.

The upturn in the number of women on the political scene has highlighted the structural discrimination and male chauvinism associated with these offices. In Latin America, particularly Bolivia, the law has recognized a new form of violence against women: violence while carrying out their political activities. In Mexico, we have taken legal steps to fight political

harassment, discrimination and violence against potential and confirmed women candidates. Such violence does not end once they are elected. Once in office, these women are subject to intimidation, which can hinder the full exercise of their responsibilities, and even harassment, which can prevent them from carrying out their duties.

Faced with this situation, we, the men and women of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas, have a tremendous responsibility. Within our various institutions, we must continue to defend political agreements and legislation promoting women's well-being and empowerment, renew public debate on the subject by encouraging the inclusion of these themes in government programs, foster the use of gender indicators, and support the institutionalization of budgets earmarked for gender equality.

Original text in Spanish





ALICIA GUTIÉRREZ

Provincial MP

Santa Fe – Argentine

Member of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas

PREVENTING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN OUR COUNTRIES

For many years, gender-based violence has been recognized worldwide as a critical social problem.

Criteria for determining the number of victims of gender-based violence differ among countries. Some do not even keep official statistics. However, key intergovernmental organizations, like the United Nations (UN), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the World Health Organization (WHO), gather and compile data that reveals a tragically high rate of acts of violence and reported femicide in the Americas. The Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, which is committed to the defence of women in this region, is also working¹ to carry out analyses and promote legislation to protect women, in accordance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

According to UN Women: "Violence against women and girls is rooted in gender-based discrimination and social norms and gender stereotypes that perpetuate such violence." In this text, I would like to underscore the need to step up prevention through compulsory public policies targeting young people in their formative years (children and teens). For their sakes, countries should integrate this theme into their official school programs. A compulsory framework, such as a law, would ensure that teachers receive the training needed to provide an egalitarian education in order to eliminate models that incite violence once and for all.

More than 30 years have passed since the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Since then, more than 100 countries have ratified it and approved its Optional Protocol. Under this international legal instrument, the State Parties agree to meet a series of obligations toward women.

Currently, in most countries, legislation is limited to helping victims of violence after the fact. Such assistance is obviously vital, and the survivors' urgent need for it cannot be denied. However, with regard to the theme of this paper, I would like to refer to article 5 of the Convention, which stipulates:

"States Parties shall take all appropriate measures: (a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women."

Article 5 of the Convention

To change such patterns, it is vital that children receive an education that is free of gender stereotypes from early childhood on. This must continue throughout childhood and adolescence so as to normalize equality as an antithesis to sexism.

(Continued on next page)

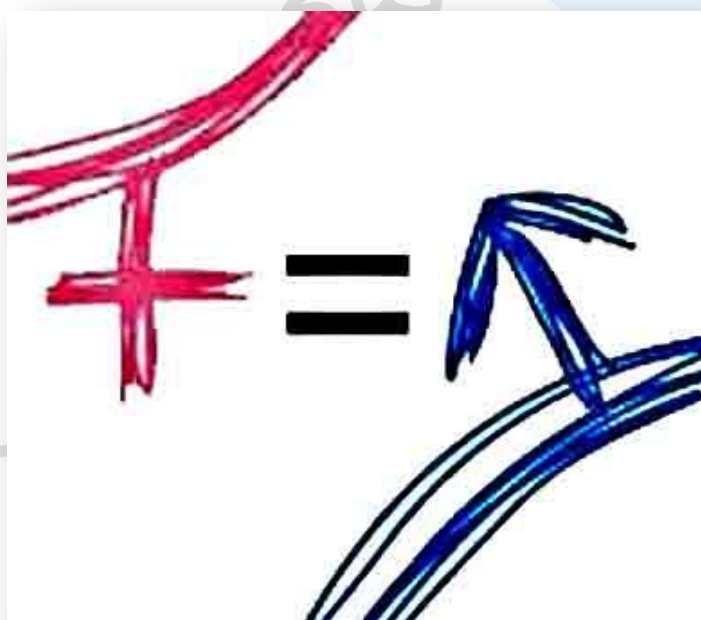
¹.<http://www.feminamericas.net/ES/tematicas/documents/vi-dalibredeviolencia.pdf>

Countless experiments have proven that informal education and awareness campaigns yield good results.² Some European countries have integrated violence prevention programs in their schools and have noticed positive impacts.³ Although it is not yet widespread, some governments have formally adopted a coeducation approach.⁴

Within our own countries, each of us can refer to these and other examples to make similar recommendations.

Our challenge will be to work together to make formal education in the Americas a tool that will help ensure that the boys and girls of today enjoy a future free from the gender-based violence that results from inequality.

Original text in Spanish



² *Voices against Violence* curriculum, UN Women

³ See María José Díaz Aguado – Universidad Complutense de Madrid (<http://www.injuve.es/sites/default/files/RJ86-04.pdf>)

⁴ Blueprint for coeducation and gender violence prevention – Basque Government (http://www.hezkuntza.ejgv.euskadi.net/r43-573/es/contenidos/informacion/dig_publicaciones_innovacion/es_conviven/adjuntos/coeducacion/920006c_Pub_EJ_hezkidetza_plana_c.pdf)

NOTES





