

Newsletter of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear colleagues:

2014 has been a year of intense work in favor of the rights of women and girls at the continental level. We have commemorated the 20th Anniversary of the "Belem Do Pará Convention", an international instrument where 32 signatory countries of the continent promised to implement and stimulate innumerable actions to prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women.

This year we will have an international agenda of supreme importance, since fundamental topics will be discussed regarding women and girls, such as the review of the Millenium Development Goals, the Post-2015 Agenda and the Platform for Action Beijing +20.



fundamental role to play in the application and follow-up of the proposed and established goals. As legislators, it is fundamental that we make our voices heard through the accomplished work. I invite you to reaffirm our commitment to continue positioning the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas and the Women's Network, as an efficient and dynamic organization, prepared to face the continental challenges.

It corresponds to us to continue working in order that the Network keeps on extending his area of influence. It is fundamental for us to be proud that the Network is now an indispensable actor in the promotion of the positions and concerns of the women of the Americas. The lessons learned are numerous, but our commitments and responsibilities towards women and girls of the continent are major.

Diva Hadamira Gastélum

Senator of the Republic of the United Mexican States

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The years 2014 and 2015 allow us the opportunity to realize a deep evaluation on the aims, indicators and programs, in search of consolidating the agenda for women and the necessary actions to achieve. As parliamentarians of the continent and representatives of our countries, we must be conscious of the innumerable challenges that we will face. In light of this context, we must continue to forge ties with other international organizations and to strengthen the agreements of collaboration established. The exchanges of good practices, as well as the analysis of themes of common interest, are fundamental to continue stimulating our Network.

The new global frame that will be established in 2015 must be based on the international obligations regarding human rights. We will have a



Speech from the Honorable Sharon Ffolkes Abraham during the Executive Committee of the Network March 29th, Montego Bay, Jamaica

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NEWS FROM THE NETWORK OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

NETWORK'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING Montego Bay, Jamaica, March 29, 2014

The 27th Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas and the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas were held on March 29 and 30, 2014 in Montego Bay, Jamaica.

Some 35 parliamentarians from Jamaica, Haiti, Mexico, Argentina, Costa Rica and Paraguay attended the Network's Executive Committee meeting, which was chaired by its President, Senator Diva Gastélum Bajo. Also in attendance were Alicia Verónica Gutiérrez, MP for the Province of Santa Fe, Argentina and Executive Committee Regional Representative for the Southern Cone, and Mireya Zamora, MP for Costa Rica and Executive Committee Regional Representative for Central America. Meeting host, the Honourable Sharon Ffolkes Abrahams, MP for Jamaica, also became an Executive Committee member as Regional Representative for the Caribbean.

In their opening remarks, senators Gómez and Gastélum both highlighted the importance of the work accomplished by the women of the Network and the need to continue proposing themes that positively impact the continent's women. Senator Gómez reiterated her commitment to supporting the Network's efforts and pursuing actions to further empower the women of the Americas.



During the works of the Executive Committee of the Network of Women Parliamentarians



Mireya Zamora, MP from Costa Rica, with COPA's President, Mrs. Zulma Gómez Caceres and the Women Network's President, Mrs. Diva Gastélum Bajo

NEWS FROM BOLIVIA

For the first time, during the last legislative elections, on October 12th, 2014, the Bolivian women reached 48% of the seats of the Plurinational Legislative Assembly of Bolivia. In total, 81 women parliamentarians will be part of the new legislature. Women will occupy 16 of 36 seats available at the Senate (44%), while in the Chamber of Deputies, they will occupy 65 of 130 seats available, a historic record of 50% of representation.

Senator Diva Gastélum Bajo, President of the Network, then called the meeting to order and proceeded with approval of the minutes of the 11th Annual Meeting of the Executive Committee, held on October 13 and 14, 2013 in Brazil. The President presented her activity report for the period October 2013 to March 2014, and the new layout of the Network Newsletter. The report of the Network's Secretariat was also tabled and approved.

The President of the Network then presented the report on her participation in the Interparliamentary Seminar on the 20th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, held in Québec City, Canada, on January 21 and 22, 2014.

The meeting gave members the opportunity to approve the 2013–2015 Work Plan and to appoint three rapporteurs on the following study themes:

1) Follow-up on the Millennium Development Goals, the Development Agenda Beyond 2015 and the 20th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Senator Diva Gastélum Bajo), 2) the effects of climate change on women (MP Sharon Ffolkes Abraham) and 3) women's sexual and reproductive rights (MP Alicia Gutiérrez).

Two conferences followed. In the first, Dr. Leith Dunn, Head/Senior Lecturer at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies of the University of the West Indies, made a presentation on Violence against Women and the Monitoring Framework to Reduce Violence against Women, discussing Jamaica's experience and the many challenges Jamaican women face.

In the second conference, Mrs. Shauna Fuller Clarke, Co-founder and Director of the B.A.S.E. Foundation, presented the Program on Awareness and Support for Endometriosis. She shared her experience as someone who suffers from the disease, and discussed the Foundation's goals and many activities.

The meeting also allowed participants to prepare the 12th Annual Meeting and to present a book on the pioneers of women's suffrage in the Americas. The Honourable Gerardo Lozano Arredondo, Ambassador of Mexico to Jamaica, adjourned the meeting and pointed out how important it was for the parliamentarians to continue working for the well-being of the women of the Americas.

The work of the Network's Executive Committee was followed by the work of the COPA Executive Committee on March 30. Attending the opening ceremony were Senator Zulma Gómez, President of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas, Senator Diva H. Gastélum Bajo, President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, the Honourable Sharon Ffolkes

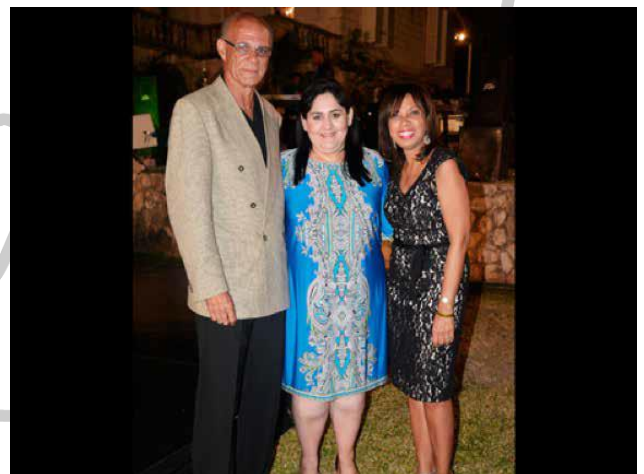
Abrahams, MP and host of the meeting, Arnoldo Brown, Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Foreign Trade, and Michael Peart, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Jamaica.

The Most Honourable Portia Simpson-Miller, Prime Minister of Jamaica, concluded the weekend's work with a speech in which she reaffirmed the importance of Jamaica's involvement in the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas.

The Prime Minister highlighted the work done by the Network of Women Parliamentarians and the many challenges the women of the Americas still face. She pointed out the need to strengthen COPA's presence in the Americas and to continue implementing this type of continent-wide forum for dialogue.



The participants at the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, March 29th, Montego Bay, Jamaica



The President of the Women Network, Mrs. Diva Gastélum Bajo, with Mr. Michael Peart, MP and Speaker of the House of Representatives of Jamaica, and the Honorable Sharon Ffolkes Abrahams, MP and host of the meeting

INTERPARLIAMENTARY SEMINAR ON THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION

Québec City, January 21 and 22, 2014

The Seminar brought together some 70 participants, including women parliamentarians from the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF), the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA). As members of the Network, were present, Diva Gastélum Bajo, president of the Network, accompanied by Rachel Marques, MP of the State of Ceará, Brazil, and Marie Bouillé, Member of the National Assembly of Québec.

The Seminar launched a process of reflection by women parliamentarians on their assessment of the implementation of the Platform for Action 20 years after its adoption and aimed to mobilize participants for the 59th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in March 2015.

In her opening speech, Mrs. Gastélum called for the effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. She also highlighted the importance of mobilizing women parliamentary networks and encouraging discussion to continue the push for legislation that advances gender rights. In the same vein, during the Seminar, she presented the General Law on the Access of Women to a Life Free From Violence, which she co-sponsored in Mexico.

At the end of the Seminar, the women parliamentarians adopted a Declaration renewing their commitment to continuing efforts, within their respective parliaments, to further the accelerated, full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The participants invited the networks of women parliamentarians to mobilize their members to actively participate in the review of progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which will be concluded at the 59th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in March 2015 and called for the mobilization of all parliamentarians in anticipation of national and regional progress reviews.



Intervention of the President of the Network during the Seminar



Official photo of participants, Interparliamentary Seminar



Seminar on the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and platform for action, Québec City

Upcoming Events

- ✓ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Fifty-ninth session
→ **20 October- 7 November, 2014, Geneva, Switzerland**
- ✓ First regular session of 2015 of the Executive Board of UN-Women
→ **February 9th, 2015, New York, United States**
- ✓ Commission on the Status of Women of the United Nations, "Implementing the Beijing Platform for Action", Fifty-ninth session
→ **9-20 March, 2015, New York, United States**
- ✓ "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**



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



Vicepresidenta / Vice-President / Vice-Présidente / Vice-Présidente

Sra. Maria Conceição Vieira Santos, Deputada
Assembléia Legislativa do Estado de Sergipe, Brasil

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. Maria Ines Pandeló Cerqueira, Deputada
Assembléia Legislativa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Brasil



El Caribe / Caribbean / O Caribe / Antilles

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



Región Andina / Andean Region / Região Andina / Région andine

Sra. Segundina Flores Solamayo, Diputada
Cámara de Diputados de la Asamblea Legislativa del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia



El Caribe / Caribbean / O Caribe / Antilles

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



Parlamentos regionales y organizaciones interparlamentarias / Regional Parliaments and Interparliamentary Organizations / Parlamentos regionais e organizações interparlamentares / Parlements régionaux et organisations interparlementaires

Sra. Rachel Marques, Deputada
União Nacional dos Legisladores e Legislativos Estaduais (UNALE)



Cono Sur / Southern Cone / Cone Sul / Cône Sud

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



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

MEMBER'S CONTRIBUTION



RITA LC DE SANTIS

Member of the National Assembly of Québec

Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister responsible for Government Administration and Ongoing Program Review

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

THE UNDER-REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE HALLS OF POWER: A MAJOR ISSUE

In Québec, until the early 1960s, women were deliberately excluded from positions of power. Though now better represented on various elected and other decision-making bodies, they continue to be outnumbered by men and are still confronted by the very real glass ceiling phenomenon¹.

Glass Ceiling

The expression glass ceiling “symbolizes the invisible barriers that keep women from reaching the highest decision-making positions in both public and private organizations. Both at work and in politics, this artificial barrier [...] ‘a transparent yet solid wall, made from organizational attitudes and prejudices’, remains in place despite decades of social development and the strides made towards gender equality”.

The percentage of female Members of the National Assembly of Québec has stagnated around 30% since the 2000s.² In the April 7, 2014 general election, 34 women were elected to office—occupying 27.2% of all seats in the House—a drop from the preceding Legislature's total of 41. Québec has in fact managed to hit the 30% mark only twice: in 2003 and 2012.

At the municipal level, women account for no more than 17.7% of mayors and 30.7% of councillors. The persistent under-representation of women in politics and within decision-making bodies clearly remains a cause for concern. Québec has adopted a number of measures, programs and action plans to remedy this situation.

Among them is the *Act respecting the governance of state-owned enterprises* passed in 2006, which stipulates that the boards of directors of such enterprises must include an equal number of women and men. Parity was reached in 2013, with 138 female (50.5%) and 135 male (49.5%) board members. Before the Act was passed, only 27.5% were women. Women also hold an increasingly larger proportion of high-level positions in the Québec public service. According to the Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor, in 2012, women occupied 43.4% of management positions and 52.1% of professional positions.³ However, men still comprise the majority of senior executives.

The Québec government has several key bodies mandated to promote gender equality, including the Conseil du statut de la femme and the Secrétariat à la condition féminine. In this respect, the policy Turning Equality in Law into Equality in Fact, which covers the years 2006 to 2015, and its 2011–2015 Action Plan introduced measures aimed at increasing the number of women in positions of power.

(continued on next page)

¹ Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers, 2005, Stockholm, Julie Ballington and Azza Karam (ed.) <http://www.idea.int/publications/wip2/loader.cfm?csmodule=security/getfile&paged=14128> (accessed October 15, 2014)

² Chief Electoral Officer of Québec. Women and Politics: Influential Factors, Incentives and Overview of the Situation in Québec, 2014 (in French), www.electionsquebec.qc.ca (accessed October 15, 2014)

³ Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor. «L'effectif de la fonction publique du Québec», 2012, http://www.tresor.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/PDF/effectif_fonction_publique/effectif_11_12.pdf (accessed September 16, 2014)

Examples include continuation of the Equal Access to Decision-Making program, which, since 1999, has been the main government grants window for various organizations in the field. The program has a \$1 million budget for 2011-2015.

Québec also supports various awareness and educational programs offered by civil society organizations. The mission of Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie, for example, is to educate the population at large—women in particular—on citizen and democratic action in an effort to achieve gender parity in Québec's democratic institutions.⁴ The Groupe created the Centre de développement femmes et gouvernance, which organizes networking activities, offers mentoring programs, gives leadership training sessions and sets up "Femmes et démocratie" schools.

Although the situation has improved greatly as a result of these measures, Québec must continue its efforts to achieve more equal representation at all decision-making levels. Creative initiatives must continue to be developed, given the importance of providing citizenship education to young people. Women must become familiar with politics so that more of them will mobilize and enter the political arena. Only then will a new step towards a truly representative democracy have been taken.

Original text in french

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION AT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF QUÉBEC

Election Year	Number of women elected (on a total of 125)	Representation Women in the National Assembly
2003	38	30,4%
2007	32	25,6%
2008	37	29,6%
2012	41	32,8%
2014	34	27,2%

⁴ Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie, <http://www.gfpd.ca> (accessed September 25, 2014)



LIZA PRADO
MP, State of Minas Gerais
Brazil

WOMEN REPRESENTED THE MAJORITY OF VOTERS IN BRAZIL'S MOST RECENT ELECTIONS

Over the past four years, the number of female voters in Brazil has increased 5.81%, while the number of male voters has risen 4.54%. According to statistics released by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE), 52.13% (74,459,424 voters) of Brazil's 142,822,046 electors are women while 47.79% (68,247,598 voters) are men.

"...I am hopeful that we will succeed in changing the Brazilian mindset and encouraging women to participate in national politics."

Although the number of female voters has grown, women's actual participation in Brazilian political life remains low. Under Act No. 12.034/2009, which stipulates that there be female candidates, a minimum of 30% and a maximum of 70% of male and female candidates should run for the positions of federal, State and district deputy, and municipal councillor.

Currently, less than 10% of female candidates have been elected to these positions, which is low in comparison with other countries. According to the TSE, in 2010, Brazil elected 45 female federal deputies out of a total of 513 seats. In the Senate, only 7 women were elected, representing 13% of the 54 positions available. In Minas Gerais, only 4 of the 77 State deputies are women: myself and 3 others.

Although our President is now a woman, women politicians are rare here. While Brazil unfortunately still ranks very low for the number of female parliamentarians, I am hopeful that we will succeed in changing the Brazilian mindset and encouraging women to participate in national politics.

By empowering women, enhancing their rights and including them in the decision-making and power-taking processes, democracy will become a reality in our country.

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Original text in portuguese





DIVA HADAMIRA GASTÉLUM

Senator

Republic of the United Mexican States

President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the America

MIGRANT CHILDREN: A UNIVERSAL RESPONSIBILITY

Currently, public opinion in our region is especially concerned with what US President Barack Obama has described as the “humanitarian crisis” of migrant children. Accompanied and unaccompanied minors are crossing the Mexican border into the US in search of a dream that may not come true.

President Obama has pointed out that, between October 2013 and June 2014, 57,000 youngsters entered the United States illegally, some looking for their family and others, to escape poverty and violence in their homeland. Leaving one's country to improve one's living conditions is something Latin Americans know all too well. The numbers presented in recent months and the form deportation may take have made migration a front-and-centre issue once more.

While migration is a longstanding phenomenon, child migration has skyrocketed since the *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* came into force. On July 15, 2012, President Obama announced that the National Security Agency would no longer deport certain undocumented migrants who came to America as minors, but would grant them temporary residence, allowing them to stay in the country legally for a time to look for work or go to school. Disinformation has generated false hopes, which, in turn, have pushed child migration to the breaking point.

To take integrated action on this issue, we must identify the structural causes of migration and work to eliminate them. This means making efforts to move ahead with establishing plans to stimulate economic growth and improve working conditions throughout the region, and especially to invest in eliminating violence and uncertainty.

This emergency situation calls for international protocols to help young migrants by giving them access to services and fair legal processes reflecting the principle of the best interests of the child. Latin America can no longer ignore the conditions affecting hundreds of thousands of migrants who are victims of physical violence, rape, theft and economic or sexual exploitation.



Consequently, Mexico has proposed support plans to help improve welfare in Central America. In July 2014, our President, Enrique Peña Nieto, introduced the *Programa Frontera Sur* (Southern Border Program) to protect the rights of migrants entering Mexico and to step up efforts to fight organized crime.

These measures will, no doubt, improve the situation of the migrants entering our country.

However, work must begin immediately on implementing an international policy to better the conditions facing migrants.

Original text in spanish

“ Latin America can no longer ignore the conditions affecting hundreds of thousands of migrants who are victims of physical violence, rape, theft and economic or sexual exploitation.. ”



ALICIA GUTIÉRREZ

Provincial MP

Santa Fe – Argentina

Member of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas

PROSTITUTION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

In Argentina, the debate on prostitution and its link to human trafficking is ongoing. The fact that some people maintain that the two are unrelated raises questions that need to be answered.

To begin with, analysis of Argentina's national regulatory framework in this area - which reflects international treaties - shows the common denominator between human trafficking, sexual exploitation and all forms of discrimination against women to be the sanction applied. For example, Resolution 317, dated December 2, 1949, on the Convention adopted by the UN General Assembly and ratified by Argentina in 1957, stipulates that "prostitution and the accompanying evil of the

traffic in persons for the purpose of prostitution are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and endanger the welfare of the individual, the family and the community". The Resolution is consistent with international protocols and agreements to repress human trafficking in force since 1903. Various related laws have since been passed, culminating in the adoption, in 2012, of the *Ley Nacional Contra la Trata de Personas* (National Law against Human Trafficking), which criminalized human trafficking and introduced it into the Argentine Penal Code. As regards prostitution, maintaining or managing premises or an establishment where prostitution is practised has been forbidden since 1937, and offenders are subject to sanctions. The Penal Code has since been modified to provide for sanctions against persons who encourage or facilitate prostitution by a third party in any manner whatsoever.

This overview of existing regulatory controls contextualizes the debates that led to the creation of each of the above-mentioned pieces of legislation, which are based on the notion that

prostitution is a form of violence against women. The laws also show that Argentina has adopted an abolitionist policy which does not criminalize prostitution itself, but rather procuring (or "pimping") and sexual exploitation of a third party.

Some people hold that prostitution is a choice and promote or demand that it be regulated. They refer to the women who practise this activity as "sex-trade workers".

I believe that the idea of prostitution as a choice is put forward mainly by those who make a living from this industry, based on sexual exploitation of others. Furthermore, we must determine if this "choice" is

« We must unite to fight this aberrant industry, where women's bodies and dignity are bought and sold. »

influenced by social, economic or cultural factors. As for the concept of "work", we are dealing with an atypical working relationship where people who do not recognize the rights of these "workers" market their bodies and exploit them.

Until very recently, in Argentina, most prostitutes defended their right to be independent sex-trade workers, but a different "truth" has come to light. Many prostitutes have revealed, in investigations and to the media, that it is very difficult to practise prostitution totally independently. In most cases, a prostitute is not allowed to keep all the money she earns: part of it goes to her pimp and part to a corrupt network that includes the police and the criminal justice system.

The inevitable link between prostitution and human trafficking is also reflected in statistics provided by public bodies, which show that 75% of human trafficking victims are rescued from places that pose as taverns or cabarets, but are in reality hidden brothels.

(continued on next page)

In light of the above and the unavoidable diversity of viewpoints, we must further this debate, moving beyond the contradictions that have existed for more than a century.

To begin dismantling these sexual exploitation and human trafficking networks, I have introduced a bill to permanently close down business premises that operate as brothels, regardless of their form, in the Province of Santa Fe, in an effort to reduce this type of offence and acknowledge the State's responsibility to do so. The same measure has also been adopted in other Argentinian provinces. In addition, we must adopt public policies so women can break away from prostitution, whether they sell their bodies by choice or under constraint.

Given that the reality described in this document is the same in the rest of Latin America, I feel that this issue warrants our attention.

We must unite to fight this aberrant industry, where women's bodies and dignity are bought and sold.

To do so, we must listen to all viewpoints, especially those of people who have experienced this situation directly or indirectly.

Original text in spanish.