



**IV ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
NETWORK OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS**

**Caracas, Venezuela
November 24, 2003**

**THE IMPACT OF THE FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS (FTAA)
ON WOMEN**

RECOMMENDATION

We, the members of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, at the IV Annual Meeting of the Network, declare that:

WHEREAS, practically speaking, the commitments made in the negotiations process surrounding the creation of the FTAA tend to reduce the capacity of States and governments to adopt legislation in sectors that are crucial to the well-being of their citizens, primarily that of the status of women, and that implementing these commitments runs counter to constitutions, and thus constitutes a threat to the sovereignty of our citizens;

WHEREAS governments and parliaments have the obligation to inform their citizens on this issue, to develop the necessary forums for consultation in a spirit of transparency, and to report back at all steps in the negotiation process, primarily in respect of the impact of negotiations on women;

WHEREAS discrimination toward women persists despite the commitments made by States and governments in the framework of international conventions and most women, especially those who live in conditions of poverty, are not able to fully benefit from the advantages stemming from the liberalization of trade;

WHEREAS the current objectives of the FTAA project could limit the capacity of States and governments to offer public services in various sectors such as health and education;

WHEREAS the current provisions of the agreement are potentially harmful to women who are primarily active in the informal sector, the social economy, and micro-enterprises, unless the texts prescribe the implementation of SME support systems, particularly systems dedicated to woman-owned businesses;

WHEREAS the labour flexibility examined in the first item undermines society's reproductive rights by not guaranteeing women piece-workers the right to a leave before and after birth;

WHEREAS the Executive Committee of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas examined the problem of the impact of the FTAA on women at the special meeting it held in Québec City in April 2001 and drafted a Declaration which asserted, in particular, “[...] the need for the trade liberalization policies and the process of the Summits of the Americas to reflect the needs and concerns of women;”

WE HEREBY

AGREE to promote the active participation of women in the centres of political and economic power in order to ensure better representation of their concerns and to reflect these concerns in the FTAA negotiation process;

AGREE to promote the creation of mechanisms for coordinating with non-governmental organizations and research centres that are interested in the status of women in the context of continental integration, in order to have access to research, critical studies, and analyses of the issue;

AGREE to undertake efforts that will enable us to exercise influence on the next FTAA Ministerial Meeting, which will take place in Brazil in July 2004;

URGE the Heads of State and government to protect intellectual property and to recognize culture as an instrument of economic development to be promoted;

URGE the Heads of State and government of the Americas to recognize the value of women’s domestic work and to include it in official economic statistics;

AGREE to continue our work within our respective parliaments and the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA) to obtain the information needed on the subject of the economic, political, social, and cultural problems associated with the creation of the FTAA and to prompt the executive powers to allow the parliamentarians of the Americas to be heard in the negotiations surrounding this agreement;

URGE the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), a specialized organization of the Organization of American States (OAS), to speak out as soon as possible on the FTAA and its impact on women;

URGE the participants at COPA’s General Assembly to integrate women’s issues into their demands related to the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas;

URGE women parliamentarians to work relentlessly in favour of genuine economic, social, political, and cultural integration of the peoples of the Americas by means of agreements whose principal objective would be to remove obstacles such as the asymmetries and inequalities occurring both within countries and between the nations of the hemisphere;

URGE parliamentarians, women and men alike, to more effectively monitor the Heads of State and government with a view to defending the sovereignty of our countries, which has been seriously jeopardized by the treaties negotiated within the framework of the FTAA, the repayment of impossible amounts of foreign debt, and the imposition of International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) structural adjustment policies as well as the anti-democratic rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO);

URGE the Heads of State and government to create indicators and prepare reports dealing with the impact on gender equality caused by the implementation of trade liberalization policies, in order to develop national economic and social policies that genuinely take into consideration the situation of women, particularly in the area of informal work;

URGE all COPA parliamentarians, women and men alike, to strengthen the action of parliaments at the national level in order to monitor the FTAA process, starting in particular with the next meeting of the Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC) in Puebla, Mexico, in February 2004;

URGE the governments and our legislative assemblies to create bodies associated with all the sectors that have influence on society during the discussions of the different issues related to the FTAA;

RECOMMEND that COPA develop stronger ties with the parliaments of the countries participating in the G-20;

RECOMMEND that the Network of Women Parliamentarians constantly monitor the impact of the FTAA on women and invite the regional sections of the Network to do likewise in their respective parliaments.