



**MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
NETWORK OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS**

**San Juan, Puerto Rico
September 24, 2004**

***RESOLUTION CONCERNING
THE VIOLATION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN IRAQ***

We, the members of the Network of Woman Parliamentarians of the Americas gathered in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on this 24th day of September, 2004,

WHEREAS women in postwar Iraq need aid in three primary sectors: general and reproductive health services, education, and political participation;

WHEREAS Iraqi women must endure a situation characterized by police passivity, a lack of preventive measures against acts of violence, and the absence of repressive measures against guilty parties, to which are added the consequences of the war, destruction and looting, economic sanctions, and attacks against fundamental women's rights;

In the field of women's health:

WHEREAS in the context of insecurity that has reigned in Iraq since April 2003, and continues today, electric outages are frequent, potable water is difficult to obtain, and there is even a threat to food security, as 60% of women and their families depend on distributed food rations;

WHEREAS in this context of general insecurity, at least 400 women and girls have been raped, a figure certainly lower than actual fact given that the victims of sexual violence are often ostracized by society, and fears thereof inhibit these women and girls from participating in public life, attending school, working, and even seeking treatment;

WHEREAS the health care situation is extremely disquieting, and as a result of malnutrition and insufficient prenatal care, between 50 and 70% of pregnant women are anemic, 23% of newborn children are born with insufficient body mass, and maternal mortality has nearly doubled since 1991;

In the field of education and the workplace:

WHEREAS the literacy rate of women and the school enrollment rate of girls have diminished since 1991, and that in the year 2000, it was estimated that 31% of girls did not attend school, i.e., double the number of boys in the same situation;

WHEREAS women represent 52% of the population but only 23% of the regular work force, and many women work in the informal work force and must take extraordinary measures simply to survive;

WHEREAS in February 2003, the special Rapporteur on violence against women declared that the government of Iraq had instituted laws to protect women from sexual harassment and exploitation in the workplace, to allow women to join the armed forces and the police, and to give them equal rights in matters of divorce, real estate, taxation and voting;

In the field of women's participation in politics:

WHEREAS in spite of difficulties and dangers, women in Iraq have persisted in wanting to participate in and influence the political process by holding regional meetings, campaigning for the defense of rights, and conducting consultations on the appointment of women to positions in the transitional cabinet, the Independent Electoral Commission, and the future General Assembly;

WHEREAS the provisional constitution signed on March 8, 2004, contains a provision that forbids gender-based discrimination, although it does not specifically guarantee the equality of men and women in three key fields: marriage, the status of married women, and dissolution of marriage, inheritance rights and the possibility for non-Iraqi women married to Iraqi men to transmit their nationality to their children;

WHEREAS the provisional constitution contains specific clauses concerning the respect of equality, including a provision that a certain number of seats in parliament are granted to women, and further stipulates that any reference to the masculine includes both men and women;

WHEREAS the three women members of the Governing Council represent only 12% of the 25 members, and Ms. Aquila al-Hashimi, one of the three women sitting as members of the Council, was killed in an attack in September 2003;

HEREBY desire to manifest our solidarity with women who suffer from and are victims of violence, specifically the women of Iraq, and therefore

ENCOURAGE the Iraqi Governing Council to quickly address the need to promote women's economic autonomy, especially women who are poor, heads of families, or who live in rural areas; increase women's competitiveness in the workplace; reduce the education gap between boys and girls; develop institutional, social, and economic structures that take women's concerns into account; and recognize and use the capabilities and aptitudes of women in order that they may profit equally from all training and educational opportunities;

ASK that all parties concerned examine the need to protect women's and young girls and adolescents' rights to ensure that all sex crimes can be reported, and to ensure that all forms of discrimination against women and young girls and adolescents cease;

ASK that measures be taken to reform the judicial system; ensure that legislation is in accordance with international standards and conventions; include women in the police forces; make medical, psychological, and legal services available to victims of rape and sexual violence; and supply financial and technical aid to organizations of civil society that help women and young girls and adolescents who have suffered violence or other constraints in any form whatsoever;

RECOMMEND that the authorities now in place turn their attention to reproductive health, specifically emergency obstetrics, as a priority, and that they allocate the needed funds;

ASK that officials be appointed within each department and at each level of government who are sensitive to women's issues, to ensure that humanitarian aid, reconstruction, and civil administration provide for the needs of Iraqi women;

REITERATE the importance of the principle of guaranteeing and providing legal security to women; working unflaggingly to ensure respect for constitutional precepts, treaties, agreements, and current laws; seeing to the protection and promotion of human rights; seeking equality for persons of both sexes; and promoting laws that prevent, penalize, and eradicate violence against women;

REAFFIRM our firm decision to continue to fight against all forms of discrimination and violence against women in any part of the world, especially in countries that are theaters of armed conflict;

EXHORT competent authorities to move forward with the programs developed at United Nations world conferences on human rights and women's rights that harmonize, ensure, and improve existing legislation, regulations, and rules through amendments, specifically the signing and/or ratification of the optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), thereby enabling women to lead their lives free from armed conflict and all other forms of discrimination and violence.