



NETWORK OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS
(COPA: PARLIAMENTARY CONFEDERATION OF THE AMERICAS)
PRESIDENT: APARECIDA GAMA, DEPUTY
(RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL)

SECRETARIAT OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF UNALE
(NATIONAL UNION OF STATE LEGISLATURES OF BRAZIL)
SECRETARY: SÔNIA FONTES, DEPUTY (BAHIA, BRAZIL)

Bahia Declaration

**“THE RIGHTS OF ALL WOMEN,
A MISSION FOR ALL”**

April 2006

Salvador, State of Bahia, Brazil

Presentation

The universal recognition of human rights requires that efforts be expended to ensure these rights are fully and concretely recognized and exercised in all societies.

The purpose of this document is to urge political leaders to make a commitment to respecting and defending rights related to sexual and reproductive health by making them priorities for the improved quality of life and well-being of women.

This document constitutes a step toward empowerment for the states and nations of Latin America, a further step toward dignity and life for the people, and a call for greater action. The Bahia Declaration is a joint initiative by women parliamentarians of the Americas to urge that we join our efforts together to ensure the rights of all women become everyone's responsibility.

Salvador de Bahia, April 22, 2006

Aparecida Gama, Deputy
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¹ The acronym COSAM stands for *Coordenação da Saúde da Mulher*, meaning "Women's Health Coordination Office."

² The acronym SESAB stands for *Secretaria da Saúde do Estado da Bahia*, meaning "State of Bahia Secretariat of Health."

We, the women parliamentarians of the Americas, gathered together at the Parliamentary Forum held during the 13th Latin American Congress on Sexology and Sexual Education in Salvador, State of Bahia, from April 19 to 22, 2006, have agreed on the release of the following declaration:

Recognizing

- That the violation of women's human rights is closely associated with gender discrimination, which is widespread in society and perpetuated by state institutions, among others;

Considering

- That "all human rights are universal, indivisible, and interdependent"³;
- That sexual and reproductive rights include the right to a life of dignity, freedom, and safety and to equality, privacy, freedom of thought (which implies the right to live life free from any restrictive interpretation of religious texts, beliefs, philosophies, or customs), information and education, protection and health services (including the right to information, access, freedom of choice, safety, privacy, confidentiality, comfort, treatment with dignity, and the power to decide) as well as the benefits of scientific progress, freedom of assembly and political participation, the right to marry or not, the right decide whether or not to have children, and the right not be subject to torture or mistreatment;
- That the right to sexual freedom encompasses the possibility for individuals to express their full sexual potential, which includes the right to establish any type of sexual orientation or association but excludes all forms of sexual coercion, exploitation, and abuse at any time or situations in life, and that sexuality is an integral part of the personality of every human being, whose development depends on the satisfaction of basic human needs such as the desire for contact, intimacy, emotional expression, pleasure, tenderness, and love⁴;
- That the international conferences and meetings organized by the United Nations over the past 20 years have made possible the creation and signature by various countries of agreements that have represented advances in understanding and recognizing human rights in general and the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls in particular;
- That under democratic governments, parliamentarians share responsibility for institutional projects and the political, legal, and administrative institutions of society; and
- That in order for sexual and reproductive rights to be exercised, parliaments must be totally committed to promoting state democracy and secularity;

³ World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, 1993

⁴ World Association for Sexology, 15th World Congress of Sexology, 2004

Recognizing, however

- That progress on legal and organizational measures in our countries has not been sufficient to ensure the respect of obligations assumed under international agreements; and
- That economic globalization and technological progress have not led to better allocation of material and cultural goods in the world, but rather increased inequalities;

We undertake to

- Strive to have laws passed, policies introduced, and programs and projects developed that promote the full exercise of sexual and reproductive rights, by expressing the progress and historic successes of human rights;
- Devote all our efforts to guaranteeing that these policies, programs, and projects become a permanent part of the budget legislation of the various government bodies of our countries;
- Reject the fragmentation of administrative practices that has traditionally characterized the fight against gender inequality in our hemisphere by promoting dialogue and cooperation among same-level organizations and the various levels of government and by broadening coordination of societal initiatives;
- Help create mechanisms that can transform status-of-women policies into coherent, long-lasting government policies that are more than just plans;
- Include and propose the inclusion of participatory and social control bodies and methods in policies, programs, and projects pertaining to problems experienced by women and girls in our countries;
- In the parliamentary work, recognize and respect the diversity of family models in the development and negotiations of legislative measures;
- Seek to completely remove any legislation in our countries that is contrary to the concepts of integral health and sexual and reproductive rights, as expressed in international documents and agreements;
- Defend and promote, through implementation of international human rights and national human rights systems, the respect of rights set forth in international conventions and treaties that have resulted from world conferences and summits in the United Nations system⁵;

⁵ United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1981
International Pact on Civil and Political Rights, 1992; International Pact on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (IPESCR), 1992
Program of Action, World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, 1993
Program of Action, International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 1994
Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence Against Women, Belém do Pará, 1995
Action Plan, 4th World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995
World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, Durban, 2002
Brasília Declaration on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. Forum of eight Latin American countries:
Millennium Development Goals, Proposals for the Summit

And we recommend the following measures:

1. The convocation of a high level meeting of representatives from the fields of health and education and women's organizations in the hemisphere to discuss development and implementation strategies for programs to integrate discussion of sexual and reproductive rights in primary and secondary education programs in our hemisphere;
2. The creation by local governments of institutions devoted to implementing public policies for women (with a racial and generational perspective) and the protection of sexual and reproductive rights, with sufficient budget resources to guarantee the implementation of these policies;
3. The creation of institutions and participatory and social control mechanisms at all organizational levels for the purpose of implementing projects and actions intended for the general public and more specifically, the promotion of the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls;
4. Ensure that in the event of anencephalic pregnancy, women receive medical and legal advice with respect to termination or non-termination of pregnancy;
5. The harmonization throughout Latin America of legislative measures regarding migratory policies to stop criminal practices such as human trafficking and facilitate cross-border mobility for the purpose of scientific, cultural, and economic exchanges;
6. Recommend that all countries adopt specific measures to fight sexual, domestic, and family violence against women;
7. Recommend the integration of care and medication for sexual dysfunctions in the public health network, as well as medical care for climateric women⁶;
8. Recommend that Latin American governments begin studying the possibility of refusing exclusive rights on antiretroviral medications that are on the list of basic care medications in the STD⁷/AIDS⁸ program, of which the Brazilian program is an example that includes the essential elements to ensure the effectiveness and continuity of these programs in our countries.

Salvador, April 22, 2006

⁶ "Climateric" refers to all stages of life where the woman's body can have a radical transformation (pregnancy, menopause, etc.)

⁷ The acronym DST stands for *Doenças sexuais transmissíveis*, meaning "sexually transmitted diseases" (STDs).

⁸ The acronym AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

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Edda Acuña, Senator, Argentina
Iara Bernardi, Federal Deputy, Brazil
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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