



**NETWORK OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
EL CALAFATE (SANTA CRUZ), ARGENTINA
JANUARY 24, 2009**

Recommendation on human rights, children and migration

WE, women parliamentarians of the congresses and parliamentary assemblies of unitary, federal and federated states, regional parliaments, and interparliamentary organizations, assembled together on January 24, 2009 in El Calafate (Santa Cruz), Argentina for the Executive Committee Meeting:

NOTE AND APPLAUD the recommendations made by Gabriel Lerner in “Migrations in the Americas: Migrant Children and Adolescents”, a paper Mr. Lerner gave during a high-level meeting of American parliamentarians held on January 23, 2009 in El Calafate (Santa Cruz), Argentina;

AGREE to do everything in our power to ensure that our respective countries follow up on the said recommendations;

ENERGETICALLY CONDEMN all acts of discrimination against the children of migrants, and any violation of their fundamental rights, since such acts run counter to our objectives of democracy, peace and development;

AGREE to monitor closely, as members of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, the situation of migrants and their children as it evolves over time, including their situation with regard to human rights;

URGE our respective Parliaments—and our countries’ social media—to denounce such acts.

MIGRATIONS IN THE AMERICAS AND THE RIGHTS OF MIGRANT CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Gabriel Lerner

Protecting the Rights of Migrant Children and Adolescents: Principles and Proposals

From a variety of sources—the Montevideo Declaration adopted at the VIIIth Iberoamerican Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials responsible for Childhood and Adolescence, held in October 2006; the documents of the Inter-American Children's Institute of the OAS; and the observations formulated by the UN's Committee on the Rights of the Child—we may identify a number of principles and conclusions that can be used to guide countries in their efforts to guarantee that the migration process does not infringe the rights of children and adolescents. Of these principles and proposals, we found the following to be particularly salient:

- It is important that we examine the causes no less than the consequences of migration. The search for solutions to the problems faced by migrant children and adolescents or members of migrant families must be undertaken with an approach founded on human rights—founded, that is, on the prescriptions of the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child and on other international human rights treaties.
- Whether at the level of the State, the society or the family, safeguarding children's rights is an ethical, political, social, legal and economic imperative. It is also one of the most efficient ways of combating problems such as poverty, social exclusion and regional inequalities. To get at the root causes of migration, there is no better strategy than that of fostering social inclusion and participatory democracy in our respective countries.
- Families must enjoy such opportunities and conditions as will allow them to fulfil their role as the basic unit of society for the education of children and adolescents and for the protection of their rights. For this to happen, it will be necessary to foster the application and improvement of social and economic policies relating to employment and education.
- The principle of non-discrimination must form a concrete part of government policies aimed at children and adolescents. Regardless of their background or situation, migrant children and adolescents have certain fundamental rights that must be protected: the right to life, the right to participate in their society's development, and the right to possess an identity.
- As a priority, we must attend to the situation of children and adolescents unaccompanied by or separated from their families, so that they may enjoy the same rights as domestic children.
- Adequately protecting children's right to an identity will require that birth sub-registries be abolished and that identification documents be made more readily available. With the same view to protecting the right to identity, we must ensure

that children have access to information and to translation and interpretation services in their own languages.

- Policies respecting migration must be designed and implemented as part of an approach that takes human rights into account and ties in seamlessly with policies aimed at children, adolescents and their families. It is imperative to make sure that officers and civil servants who deal with migrant children, adolescents and their families possess the qualifications and sensitivities required to adequately assume this responsibility.

- With a view to eliminating the racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance to which migrants and their families may be subject, the countries concerned by migration must promote conditions conducive to harmony, tolerance and respect between migrants and the rest of the population.

- It is therefore necessary to establish consensus-inspired regional guidelines, systems of information, and protocols aimed at procuring special protection for children and adolescents whose return must be sought because they were victims of human trafficking.

- Each country must improve coordination between institutions and between sectors as a means of protecting children and adolescents against all forms of sexual exploitation, whether manifest and visible or dissimulated behind other activities.

- We must move forward with the implementation of international cooperation mechanisms of a technical nature, and with the elaboration of agreements for international, regional and bilateral cooperation, in order to develop inter-institutional and inter-sectoral programs that take a comprehensive approach to the problem.

- It is imperative that the State which receives the largest number of migrant children and adolescents—the United States of America—ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The goal is to renew our various countries' commitment in order to overcome the obstacles now facing children, adolescents and their families involved in the migratory process, obstacles that, being characteristic of our continental situation, require our firm resolve to protect the dignity and the rights of migrant children and adolescents.