

TRANSLATION



### **MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

My term as president of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, to which I was elected in Mexico in September 2008, is now coming to a close. These two years have provided an opportunity for some exciting work, during which we have discussed our respective experiences and knowledge and worked as a team to attain our Network's objectives, besides sharing our joys and disappointments. My dear fellow Parliamentarians, thanks to your efforts, we have moved on to a new stage in a constantly-evolving process to identify promising themes that promote solidarity and gender equity, and also that strengthen women's political autonomy. I would like to emphasize the efficient, painstaking work of the technical staff, the advisors, the Québec Secretariat, the Mexico Secretariat, the team in Argentina, the translators, and all the precious human resources that have helped us complete our work. As the representative from Venezuela, I was able to include the theme "The impact of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) on women in the region" as part of the work schedule for the Network, at the start of my term of office. I believed that it was important to make you aware of this integration proposal based on solidarity and complementarity between peoples, that we are building, from the South, Latin America and the Caribbean, to eradicate social exclusion and poverty by changing people's living conditions and quality of life.

The aim of this report is to present the basic activities of the Network during the term that ends here today in Mar del Plata in Argentina. It lists the meetings organized, the programs completed, the main themes identified, the annual conferences that we have attended and the resolutions that we have adopted. The report also describes the promotion, publicity and information activities implemented to make the Network better known in international forums.

I would like extend my greetings and affection to all the members of the Network's Executive committee, to President Edda Acuña and, to all the other members of the Confederation's Executive committee, who successfully directed debates on themes of key importance that were often complex and controversial. I am happy to see that this interparliamentary forum is open to fundamental debates designed to achieve a consensus. I would also like to mention the work completed by the Québec Secretariat for the implementation of the Network's plan of action.

I take this opportunity to underline President Acuña's sense of responsibility and personal sacrifice, enthusiasm, as well as the great dedication invested in all the Confederation's activities. Through her actions she illustrates the very nature of the attitude and the behaviour that women who assume roles of responsibility should have.

Lastly, I invite you to continue working together to uphold women's rights, to develop and consolidate the themes at the heart of our activities. In particular, I call upon your efforts to spread the work of the Network and to establish alliances with peoples and organizations in order to eliminate social exclusion and discrimination as factors in the violence to which women of all ages are subjected. I have no doubt that the new president will meet with every success during her term of office.

#### As we work together, we strengthen our fraternal ties!

With my warmest regards, I remain sincerely yours,

#### Flor María Ríos

President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas Member of the National Assembly of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela



### A MESSAGE FROM THE COPA PRESIDENT

When Flor María Ríos became president of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, she was already known in international forums as a staunch advocate of women and their rights.

Through her committed and courageous efforts, Flor María has made her mark as a tireless defender of rights for women and those most in need.

In Argentina we would say that Flor María is "a sister in the struggle"—a valued comrade who stands shoulder to shoulder with us on behalf of a cause—and under her direction, the Network of Women Parliamentarians has made unprecedented strides in helping women articulate their most important demands. I am convinced that by shining a spotlight on these issues we have been able to make a concrete, significant contribution to the major debate taking place in the international community.

Flor María has carried out her mandate as Network president with energy and passion and responsibility and discipline, expressing and embodying the ideals of COPA and all those among us who are rising up and fighting to establish a fairer, better united democracy with equality for all.

**Edda Evangelina Acuña** President of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA) Senator from the province of Buenos Aires, Argentine Republic



### Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas

### Action Plan

An action plan presented by the Network president was adopted during an Executive Committee meeting held January 24, 2009, in El Calafate, in Argentina's Santa Cruz province. The plan addresses major themes that will drive Network initiatives, based on primary objectives described in three main sections.

- Make violence against women the subject of an awareness and education campaign
- **4** Promote the Network throughout the Americas
- Ensure that work themes adopted at the seventh annual meeting are developed and followed up

# THE NETWORK'S MAIN INITIATIVE FOR 2008–2010 IS "FIGHTING ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN"

Fighting all forms of violence against women—which includes human rights violations—was selected as the theme of our main initiative. The goal is to increase awareness and provide education about violence against women, which is tearing the fabric of our societies and infringing upon human rights. We have recommended that a communication campaign be implemented, adding a tab ("Fighting violence against women") to the *Work Themes* section of the Network website so parliamentarians can post information on the subject.

### WORK THEME DEVELOPMENT AND FOLLOW-UP

We agreed to follow up on previous work themes as well as to adopt new ones for this term.

The Impact of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) on Women in the Region (work theme approved for the September 2008– September 2010 period)

Rapporteur: Flor María Ríos, member of the National Assembly, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, who proposed this work theme at the seventh annual meeting

Delving into this theme allows us to analyze how women in the region have been impacted by ALBA, a mechanism for bringing people together and fostering cooperation through the development of social programs, humanitarian missions and microcredit. Has this helped to significantly improve the quality of life for women and their family members, as suggested by FAO and UNESCO? Numerous countries have been designated as "illiteracy-free."

Changes in Women's Participation in Politics 1999–2009: Situation and Outlook (work theme approved for the September 2008 to September 2010 term)

Rapporteur: Monique Richard, member of the Québec National Assembly, who proposed this work theme during the seventh annual meeting

The examination of this theme involves dual objectives: first, drawing up a portrait of the situation that exists in the Americas and second, analyzing the positive experiences that have helped increase women's political involvement.

### Human Trafficking in the Americas

Rapporteur: Rosa Rosario Muñoz, Deputy of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Chubut, Argentina (a report on the theme, previously approved for the 2006–2008 term, was presented during the seventh annual meeting; it will remain a valid theme until the eighth annual meeting)

Examining this theme will help us better understand the role that parliamentarians play in the ratification and application of international treaties; the sharing of experiences that have significantly impacted the legislative, government and social milieu; and the international cooperation mechanisms that can fight this scourge on society.

Implementation in the Americas of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its optional protocol

Rapporteur: Emilia Patricia Alfaro de Franco, Deputy of the Chamber of Deputies of the Republic of Paraguay (theme previously approved for the 2006–2008 term, on which a report was presented during the seventh annual meeting)

The objective in examining this theme was to analyze implementation of CEDAW and its optional protocol in the Americas.

### **RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

### **Network Meetings**

### Executive Committee meeting in El Calafate, Argentina, on January 24, 2009

The Network's Executive Committee held its first meeting of the 2008–2009 term on January 24, 2009, in El Calafate, Argentina, with Senator Selva Judit Forstmann presiding, just months before her death. Chairpersons welcomed committee

members. Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting and seventh annual meeting, which both took place in Mexico on September 9 and 10, 2008, were approved. The action plan and strategies for the 2009–2014 term were presented and approved. An update on previous work themes was also given.



Parliamentarians from the Network's Executive Committee and the Confederation, along with other

specially invited attendees, were active participants in Argentinean senator María Perceval's presentation on violence against women.

The following resolutions were adopted:

- A declaration in support of women victims of war violence
- A recommendation regarding human rights, children and migration

## Network president's meeting with representatives from the Québec National Assembly, June 2 to 4, 2009

I was invited by the Québec Secretariat to visit the Québec National Assembly (the Network's founding assembly and Secretariat host) for the purpose of becoming better acquainted with provincial efforts to improve the status of women. I met with Monique Richard, Secretariat member, to review details regarding the eighth annual meeting and the Network's action plan. We discussed specific themes that are germane to the Americas with member Jacques Chagnon (Second Vice President of the National Assembly and First Vice President of COPA) and took

part in a meeting arranged by Yvon Vallières, President of the Québec National Assembly, where ideas pertaining to legislation and the status of women in the Americas were discussed. We also met with public policymakers who deal with women's issues, the president of Conseil du statut de la femme, and the directors of Centre d'attention aux femmes and Centre des travailleuses in order to learn more about these organizations and the assistance they offer women who are victims of domestic violence.

It was an interesting, enriching trip with a very full schedule, and I would like to thank the organizing committee and delegation for their hospitality and hard work.

### Eighth annual meeting of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas in Salta, Argentina, on September 16, 2009

The Network's eighth annual meeting was held September 16, 2009, in Salta, Argentina. The eradication of violence against women, adopted during the presidency of Senator Edda Acuña, was its overarching theme.

All agenda items were covered during the Executive Committee meeting. The

Network president and secretary reported on activities completed during the 2008–2009 term and those reports were then approved. Action strategies for the 2009–2014 term were also approved. Parliamentarians reported on regional initiatives and presented a progress report documenting action plan implementation. Parliamentarians responsible for tracking problem areas read their findings. <u>Executive</u> Committee members were elected for the 2009–



<u>2010 term of office</u>. Committee members then spoke about what had been accomplished during the previous year, after which their appointments were approved.

A roundtable on eliminating violence against women and human rights violations in armed combat situations featured such speakers as Dr. Lola Valladares, a subjectmatter expert and UNIFEM Andes region coordinator; deputy Maris Eizaga, representative of the National Assembly of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and theme rapporteur; Dr. Alejandra Chacón (Argentina); deputy María Silva Pace, human rights secretary of the government of the province of Salta (Argentina); deputy Edine Von Herold Duarte, representative of the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica; and deputy Sonia Segura Varsoly, representative of the Congress of the Republic of Guatemala. This topic generated considerable interest among the parliamentarians, who offered their perspectives and added insight to conclusions. During this presentation, participants voiced concerns that the presence of military bases can threaten national security. This issue was the subject of discussions between Network members and the Executive Committee of the Confederation. The latter adopted a resolution rejecting the establishment of military bases in the continent's countries.

The following resolutions were adopted:

- A resolution including a set of measures intended to fight violence against women. This resolution strongly condemned all forms of violence that occur in the workplace or situations involving armed combat.
- A declaration of support for Jacinta Francisco Marcial, freed on September 16, and Teresa González and Alberta Alcantara, two aboriginal women who have been unjustly imprisoned, was presented by deputy Alliet Bautista Bravo.

### Executive Committee meeting in Querétaro, Mexico, on July 20, 2010

This Executive Committee meeting was held in conjunction with COPA's extraordinary general assembly. The minutes of the eighth annual meeting, which was held September 16, 2009, in Salta, Argentina, were approved. Flor María Rios, Confederation president and a member of Venezuela's National Assembly, welcomed participants and presented a preliminary activities report for the one-year period beginning September 2009. Deputy Marie Boullié, representing the Network Secretariat, gave a report. Both reports were approved. The Network Secretariat representative read a proposal to amend Network statutes and procedural rules, which had been provisionally approved and will be submitted for Executive Committee approval during the organization's ninth annual meeting. Rapporteurs responsible for work theme follow-up presented their respective

reports. Regional initiatives and activities planned by Executive Committee members to address the status of women were covered next. The conference theme, "Women's Political and Economic Empowerment," will be presented as part of the Network's ninth annual meeting, where deputy Estela Méndez de De Micheli will speak on "Productivity and Women" and deputies María Elena Torresi and Diva Hadamira will present a comparative study of how legislation empowers women's political and economic autonomy.<sup>1</sup> In addition, a representative from the National Assembly of Québec, designated as rapporteur for this theme, will speak about women's political involvement.





<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>This title has been adapted for purposes of this text.

We also had the chance to make plans for the Network's ninth annual meeting, scheduled for November 16, 2010, in Mar del Plata, Argentina, in conjunction with COPA's tenth general assembly.

A presentation entitled "**Participation and the Role of Women in 200 Years of Freedom in the Americas**" was given, coinciding with independence bicentennials taking place in numerous Latin American countries. This roundtable style presentation gave many parliamentarians the opportunity to express their visions and introduce proposals relating to their homelands. Deputies Diva Hadamira and Diana Elizarrarras Kim were the speakers and deputy Flor María Ríos served as moderator.

A comment about the very high quality of the presentations is in order. Wellgrounded in historic background, they gave attendees a very real look at the courage of women throughout the Americas, shining new light on how our sisters have helped bring about independence in the region.

The following resolution was adopted:

The Querétaro declaration: As numerous American nations prepare to observe their independence bicentennials on July 20, 2010, we acknowledge the fundamental role played by women—both unknown heroines and those whose names are recorded in history—in the struggle for liberty. In particular, we recognize Manuela Sáenz for her valour in active combat and her visionary contribution to politics and liberation.

COPA also commemorated the bicentennial by organizing a special presentation entitled "**The Independence Bicentennial in my Country: Vision and Foresight**." Deputy Cristina Ruiz Sandoval, executive secretary, served as moderator for the session. This event was made possible with the assistance of representatives from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Paraguay, Venezuela and Jamaica, whose input substantially enriched the discussion. This session gave many Executive Committee parliamentarians the opportunity to present their insights and examine what the future may hold for the people of the Americas.

## Ninth Annual Network Meeting in Mar del Plata, Argentina, on November 16, 2010

The Network's ninth annual meeting and an Executive Committee meeting will be held during COPA's tenth General Assembly.

### Agenda:

- Deputy Flor María Ríos, Network president: welcoming remarks for participants; a preliminary report for the Executive Committee on activities implemented during the one-year period starting September 2009; a report on activities undertaken during her term of office to attain major objectives of the Network action plan
- Monique Richard, Member of the Québec National Assembly: the Network Secretariat's report for the 2009–2010 term, commending the parliamentarians for their team approach and thanking them for their confidence
- Rapporteurs: updates on current work themes
- Network Secretariat: a proposal to amend the organization's statues and procedural rules
- Evaluation and selection of work themes for the coming term; appointment of rapporteurs
- Election of Network Executive Committee members and the Network's second representative to the COPA Executive Committee
- Reflecting on "Women's Political and Economical Empowerment," the theme
  of this ninth gathering, a panel of experts from the International Knowledge
  Network of Women in Politics (i Know politics); deputy Estela Méndez de De
  Micheli, speaking on productivity and women; Monique Richard, member of
  the Québec National Assembly, addressing women's involvement in politics;
  and deputies María Elena Torresi and Diva Hadamira, presenting a
  comparative study of legislation that empowers women's political and
  economic autonomy

# COMMUNICATION, PROMOTION, INFORMATION AND DENUNCIATION ACTIVITIES

With the Secretariat's support, we have distributed numerous press releases promoting the Network to legislative bodies throughout the Americas and international organizations. These press releases have covered

- 4 Commemoration of the International Day of Rural Women (October 2009)
- Commemoration of International Women's Day (March 8, 2009 and 2010)
- 4 Condemnation of the coup d'état in Honduras (June 28, 2009)

- Condemnation of human rights violations caused by the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on the people of Cuba, with a resolution signed by the COPA and Network presidents (October 15, 2009)
- Production of articles for publication in the COPA online newsletter
- Other media announcements

The Network president approached UNIFEM, the women's fund at the United Nations, to explore collaborating on our primary initiative, **combatting all forms of violence against women**. The Network now supports the campaign begun by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon.

The president recorded a message for UNIFEM attesting to our support for the **Unite to end violence against women** campaign. It has been broadcast in the various media.



### PARTICIPATION IN OTHER INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

I have taken part in international conferences and forums, helping to gain visibility for the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas.

- We contributed to the electoral observation mission that COPA led in conjunction with presidential elections in El Salvador (March 11 to 16, 2009).
- Network parliamentarians interested in promoting gender equality in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela met with COPA to discuss the electoral observation initiative in El Salvador (March 20, 2009).
- I participated in the third general assembly of Venezuela's national union of legislators (known by its Spanish acronym, UNALEV), which took place April 2 to 4, 2009.
- I spoke before a women's parliamentarian gathering which had as its theme "Towards a Political Agenda for Gender Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean. Gender-based violence was the topic covered. This event, organized by UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and UNIFEM, was held June 15 and 16, 2009, in Madrid, Spain.



- 4 I appeared at a women parliamentarians' gathering held September 14 and 15, 2009, in Hue, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, where the theme was how female lawmakers contribute to the development, implementation and control of domestic violence. This event brought together representatives from all continents and helped to shed light on what women are experiencing in Asia, Europe and the Americas. Representing Latin America and the Caribbean, I presented an account of legislative accomplishments, emphasizing second-generation laws and the role that women parliamentarians play in fighting this scourge. The event was sponsored by UNDP, UN trust funds, AECID, UNIFEM and the National Assembly of Vietnam.
- Through the Network Secretariat, we supported the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) by providing information on the organization's initiative as part of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.
- We took part in a gathering of women parliamentarians from Latin America and the Caribbean which had as its theme "toward an integrated, comprehensive development in Latin America and the Caribbean." Women's involvement in politics was the topic covered.

Deputy Elsa Rojas Hernández of the National Assembly of People's Power (Cuba), a Network Executive Committee member for the Caribbean, was appointed to represent the Network. This gathering took place April 14 and 15, 2010, in Panama City, and was organized by the UNDP's Spanish trust fund in cooperation with UNIFEM, AECID and the department established to respond to questions about the regional center UNDP.

### OTHER TRAINING ACTIVITIES: GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

## UNIFEM conference on gender-responsive budgeting

In order to better support the work undertaken by our parliamentarians within their respective legislatures, the Network president worked with UNIFEM, an organization that has successfully employed genderresponsive budgeting in its region, to make a



conference on this topic possible. Held in Querétaro, Mexico, it was attended by Dr. Carmen Zabalaga, a subject-matter expert.

### **APPENDIX: ADOPTED RESOLUTIONS**