



NETWORK OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS

ANNUAL MEETING

Brasília, Brazil, October 14, 2013

Draft Minutes

The meeting began at 5:00 p.m.

1. Opening and welcoming remarks

Senator Diva Hadamira Gastélum, President of the Network, began the meeting with a word of welcome to the women parliamentarians present. She drew attention to the presence of Senator Zulma Gómez, COPA's Vice-President, and Dora Helena Real, Deputy and COPA's new executive secretary. The President spoke of the signing of a cooperation agreement between the Network and the Inter-American Commission of Women, and mentioned that the main theme of the Annual Meeting, *Women Parliamentarians of the Americas for the defense of human rights*, was discussed at length during the Second Consultation with Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, held earlier in the day.

During the Consultation, various experts spoke on the theme of *priorities for the legislative agenda for women's rights and gender equality in the Americas*, and on the theme of *initiatives to guarantee human rights for women and gender equality in the parliaments of the Americas*.

The parliamentarians present also participated in a group discussion on the priorities to be established in advancing the legislative agenda on a number of fronts, in particular with regard to the eradication of violence against women and the protection of women's sexual and reproductive rights.

2. Reading and approval of the agenda

The Agenda read as follows:

AGENDA

- 1.** Opening and welcoming remarks
 - President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, Diva H. Gastélum Bajo
- 2.** Approval of the agenda
- 3.** Presentation of the Network's 2010–2013 Activity Report by the President
- 4.** Presentation of the Network newsletter
- 5.** Secretariat's report
 - Network Secretariat representative, Marie Bouillé
- 6.** Presentation of reports on work themes
 - a.** Poverty, pay equity and the economic empowerment of women
Rapporteurs :
 - Ileana Brenes Jiménez, Deputy of the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica
 - Alicia Verónica Gutiérrez, Deputy from Santa Fe, Argentina
 - Marie Bouillé, Member of the National Assembly of Quebec
 - b.** Water, environment and the status of women
Rapporteur :
 - Mireya Zamora Alvarado, Deputy of the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica
- 7.** Presentation and adoption of draft resolutions
 - a.** Poverty, pay equity and the economic empowerment of women
 - b.** Water, environment and the status of women
- 8.** Presentation and adoption of the draft amendments to the Statutes of the Network
- 9.** Election of the Executive Committee for the 2013–2015 term
- 10.** Miscellaneous
- 11.** Adjournment

The Agenda was adopted without change.

3. Presentation of the Network's 2010–2013 Activity Report by Network President Diva Gastélum

Ms. Gastélum briefly summarized her activity report, putting the emphasis on the themes studied by the Network. She mentioned the various international meetings she had attended as Network representative and said that she would continue to work towards achieving concrete results for the Network.

She drew attention to the development of investigations on the following four fundamental themes: women and armed movements in the Americas; women's right to a life free of violence; women of the Americas; and the salary gap on the American continent. She thanked her parliamentary committee and the Mexican Congress for their unstinting support in this important research carried out on behalf of the Network.

She reiterated how important it is for members of the Network's Executive Committee to participate actively, and mentioned the necessity of avoiding a piecemeal approach and continuing to improve women's rights in the Americas.

She thanked COPA President Jacques Chagnon, previous COPA Executive Secretary Cristina Ruiz Sandoval (Deputy), and the Network's technical team for supporting her during her term as President over the past three years.

4. Presentation of the Network newsletter

The President gave a brief account of the contents of the last Network newsletter, which includes a summary of her activities during her 2010–2013 term. She thanked the contributors to the newsletter, and emphasized that it was necessary to continue to take up themes vital to the Network's interests and also to make the publication more visually appealing.

5. Presentation of the Secretariat's Report by Marie Bouillé, Member of the National Assembly of Québec

Ms. Bouillé presented the main aspects of the Secretariat's report. She explained how the Secretariat collaborated with the President and the other members of the Executive Committee in order to coordinate the Annual Meeting, follow up on work themes and support rapporteurs. She drew attention to the implementation of the Network's 2010–2012 Work Plan and the promotion of the Network, as well as the contribution of the Secretariat in organizing and coordinating the Second Consultation with Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, in close collaboration with the Inter-American Commission on Women and with the host committee in Brasília.

6. Presentation of reports on work themes:

(a) Poverty, pay equity and the economic empowerment of women

Ileana Brenes, Deputy from Costa Rica, Alicia Gutiérrez, Deputy from Santa Fe, Argentina, and Marie Bouillé, Québec MNA, presented their respective parts of the report on the theme “Poverty, pay equity and the economic empowerment of women.” This was the first Network report to be made by three rapporteurs from different geographical regions.

The report establishes the main trends with regard to poverty, equal pay for women and the economic empowerment of women. It was therefore possible to make a series of observations with regard to the situation of women in relation to the three aspects of the theme, despite the differences that exist between the countries and regions discussed in the report.

While the statistics vary from one country to another, in almost every region of the Americas women now have a higher level of intermediate and university education than men, though this has not translated into more economic power. In all the regions studied, the percentage of women in the labour force remains lower than that of men, and the salary gap persists.

In conclusion, the three rapporteurs reaffirmed how important it is for parliamentarians of the Americas to take a stand in favour of gender equality and to adopt laws, programs and other measures that will promote the economic empowerment of women.

(b) Water, the environment and the status of women

Mireya Zamora, Deputy from Costa Rica, presented her report, “Water, the environment and the status of women.” She emphasized the necessity of overcoming reductionist gender roles in natural resources management and of recognizing women as persons who know, use and administer natural resources. In particular, she noted that women must be recognized as playing a crucial role with regard to water supply, management and protection.

She introduced an initiative entitled “Women of the Americas for water,” whose goal is to expand women’s participation in the promotion of water resources at the local level. The idea behind the initiative is to create an entity that will guide policy directions in such a manner as to ensure that community organizations in member countries are established to organize drinking water supply services. But the initiative goes further still, calling for legislation to be passed to ensure that women make up at least 40% of the membership of the steering committees of such organizations. This model of women’s empowerment, combined with a series of strategies to support women in elected office, could engender a new human development model linking the themes Women-Water-Environment.

7. Presentation and adoption of draft resolutions on work themes

The two draft resolutions—“Poverty, pay equity and the economic empowerment of women,” and “Women’s Network for water, a compromise for a better future: women, water and sustainable development”—were adopted. The President explained that both had been revised during the Executive Committee meeting and that a few amendments had been adopted. In the resolution on Poverty, pay equity and the economic empowerment of women, an amendment was made to replace “pay equity” by “pay equality”. Both draft resolutions were adopted and, in accordance with the adoption mechanism, were presented at COPA’s General Assembly on October 16, 2013.

8. Presentation and adoption of draft amendments to the statutes of the Network

At the Annual Meeting, the Executive Committee presented to those present the draft amendments to the Network’s Statutes, which the Network examined and adopted by consensus. The Committee recommended that sections 5 and 6 of the Statutes be amended to make the President’s term renewable one time only and to prohibit the Vice-President from being re-elected. The draft amendments were adopted by majority vote.

9. Election of the Network’s Executive Committee for the 2013–2015 term

Maria Conceição Vieira, Deputy from Brazil, explained that during the meeting of the Network’s Executive Committee, the members agreed on the candidates for the various positions on the Executive Committee. The list of these candidates was read aloud, and the members of the Executive Committee for the 2013–2015 term were elected by majority vote.

President Gastélum thanked all the parliamentarians present, with special thanks to Deputy Mireya Zamora for her work in helping with the President’s re-election.

Senator Zulma Gómez congratulated Senator Diva Gastélum on her re-election and presented her with an appointment certificate for the position of President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas for the 2013–2015 term.

10. Miscellaneous

The President drew attention to the fact that attendance at the Annual Meeting was low, and mentioned the necessity of continuing to develop new tools to promote the Network’s activities and publications in order to increase the participation of women parliamentarians.

A discussion ensued on the themes for the next term:

- Violence against women

- Migrant women
- The impacts of climate change on women (agriculture and food security)
- Maternal and infant mortality
- Women's access to justice and legal protection
- Women's sexual and reproductive rights
- Review of local agendas from a gender perspective
- Unsafe abortions

The President also mentioned that a draft Work Plan for the 2013–2015 term will be submitted for official approval at the new Executive Committee's next meeting, which will be held at a place yet to be determined. The next Annual Meeting of the Network will be held in Paraguay in the fall of 2014.

11. Adjournment of the meeting

The President adjourned the 11th Annual Meeting at 8:00 p.m., after which the official photograph of the new Executive Committee for the 2012–2015 term was taken.