



**ACTIVITY REPORT BY THE PRESIDENT OF  
THE NETWORK OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS  
FOR THE PERIOD OF NOVEMBER 24, 2003, TO MAY 7, 2005**

**PRESENTED AT THE 5TH ANNUAL MEETING  
ON MAY 7, 2005**

**FOZ DO IGUAÇU, BRAZIL**

## 1. Presentation

As president of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, it is my pleasure to submit this report, which presents the Network's main achievements since the last Annual Meeting held in Caracas, Venezuela, on November 24, 2003.

Created in 1999, the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas continues to assert itself as a key forum for women parliamentarians from throughout the Americas as well as a source of innovative ideas and projects for women in this hemisphere.

The Network counts on the commitment of its Executive Committee members, and I thank them for their availability and relentless efforts to support the cause of women in the Americas.

The Network also counts on the support of the Secretariat staff to carry out its activities. The Secretariat is headquartered at the Québec National Assembly, the Network's founding assembly. Since the Secretariat was created, the Québec National Assembly has assumed its operating costs, notably by providing an advisor responsible for implementing Network activities. I would like to reiterate my gratitude to the Québec National Assembly for the support and major contribution it provides the Network.

I am extremely satisfied with the progress we've made in the past year implementing the action plan we adopted in 2002.

Adopting rules of procedure allowed our organization to better structure its operations by clearly defining the processes for electing our Executive Committee, following up on our work themes, and adopting resolutions, as well as for our association with other organizations for the purpose of holding partnership activities.

With regard to problems dealt with by the Network since the last annual meeting, we were able to upgrade the website with document databanks on gender budget analysis (GAIA), the impact of the FTAA on women, and the theme of this year's annual meeting (the impact of migration on women).

We also succeeded in equipping the Network with independent financial resources by creating a funding committee. The Network produced promotional documents that made getting in touch with potential backers easier, and work on a funding strategy is now in full swing. In this regard, at the 49th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women held recently, I noted the interest our work is attracting among the numerous international organizations that could help fund our operations.

Lastly, among the promotional tools we were able to develop over the past year, I am especially proud of the [www.feminamericas.org](http://www.feminamericas.org) website, which is now easier to access and allows the Network to publicize its achievements in a user-friendly way.

## **2. Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas 2004–2005 Activity Report**

### **2.1 Network Executive Committee Meeting held in Brasilia, Brazil, March 24, 2004**

The Executive Committee meeting held in Brasilia allowed certain points related to implementing the action plan to move forward. On this occasion, the comprehensive action plan was unanimously accepted, conferring new roles on Executive Committee members. Ms. Fatima Houada-Pepin, member of the Québec National Assembly and representative of the Network's founding assembly and host to the Secretariat, was designated as rapporteur for the theme "Women and the Free Trade Area of the Americas." Ms. Albertina Urbina Zelaya, Nicaragua National Assembly member and representative of Central America, was designated as rapporteur for the theme "Gender Budget Analysis." Lastly, Ms. Alice Portugal, Legislative Assembly member for Bahia, Brazil, was designated as rapporteur for the theme of the annual meeting, "The Impact of Migration on Women."

As part of the followup to the comprehensive action plan, the Executive Committee decided to set up a funding committee made up of the Network president and one elected representative from each area with a COPA secretariat, namely Brazil, Mexico, and Québec.

We also adopted three rules of procedure. The first defines the terms and conditions for the Network's participation in other organizations' seminars, events, and meetings. Another sets out the terms for electing members to the Network Executive Committee. A new voting procedure was also adopted whereby the representatives of each of the five major regions will be elected only by the women parliamentarians from their own regions who attend the annual meeting. In addition, representatives of regional parliaments and interparliamentary organizations shall be elected by all the women parliamentarians representing the regional parliaments and interparliamentary organizations who attend the annual meeting. The Executive Committee also adopted a rule of procedure regarding the selection of themes, the development of documents, and the adoption of recommendations made by the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas.

The representatives adopted a resolution on the 10th anniversary of the Beijing Conference, which prompted Executive Committee members to conduct a followup on commitments made by their respective countries regarding the implementation of the Beijing Action Program and promote among their legislative assemblies, regional parliaments, and interparliamentary organizations the adoption of legislation and measures that take into consideration the resolutions and recommendations emerging from the work of world conferences on women.

Following the Executive Committee meeting held in Brasilia in March 2004, I sent a letter presenting the Network to 300 presidents of parliamentary assemblies, regional parliaments, and interparliamentary organizations in the Americas. Enclosed with the letter were a report on the meeting in Brasilia, the resolution adopted at the meeting, and the promotional document on the Network. I sent a similar mailing to members of the COPA Executive Committee to help them learn more about the Network's work and also encourage more women to take part in the Network's activities.

## 2.2 Network Executive Committee Meeting held in San Juan, Puerto Rico, September 24, 2004

This meeting helped prepare for the Network's Annual Meeting, notably by further defining the theme to be presented and developing a communication and invitation strategy to ensure record participation.

We also adopted recommendations on the violation of women's rights in Darfur and Iraq, as well as a resolution on the granting of visas to parliamentarians visiting the United States. A resolution to strengthen the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN) was also adopted by the Executive Committee members.

We decided to change the rule of procedure for adopting resolutions to ensure they are followed up. From now on, the Secretariat must ascertain from the person who proposes the resolution to whom or to which organizations she wishes the resolution to be sent. It was also decided that a clause to this effect would be systematically added to resolutions adopted and that parliamentarians would ensure their distribution and implementation.

Lastly, the Network's new website was unveiled at this meeting. It features our organization's new graphics and makes promoting our activities easier thanks to its address ([www.feminamericas.org](http://www.feminamericas.org)), of which it is sole owner. I will reveal more about this project further on.

## 2.3 Participation of the President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas in the 49th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, February–March 2005

I took part in the 49th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women from February 28 to March 11. This commission, which meets annually, is made up of 45 members appointed by governments.

This year, the Commission's work dealt with two main issues: (i) progress on the implementation of the Beijing Action Program, and (ii) current challenges and strategies regarding the advancement and strengthening of women's skills.

The some 6,000 participants focused on numerous topics at the eight workshops and a plenary session for national declarations, including violence against women, violations of women's and children's rights in conflict situations, the equality of rights, healthcare access, the environment, and so on.

By taking part in this international conference, I was able to familiarize numerous representatives of organizations from various countries with the Network and distribute promotional material on it and its Annual Meeting. The meetings I had, both formal and informal, generated a lot of interest and enthusiasm among representatives of organizations, such as Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), and various parliamentarians from Latin America.

Naturally, a followup must be conducted with organizations interested in the Network's activities in order to develop partnerships and obtain funds to support upcoming projects.

#### 2.4 Participation at a Meeting of the Mexican Congress Commission on the Status of Women, April 2005 (dates to be confirmed)

At the invitation of Ms. Aracely Escalante, Mexican senator and vice president of COPA for North America, I took part in a meeting of the Mexican Congress Commission on the Status of Women, during which I reported the results of my participation in the 49th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

This trip to Mexico also allowed me to meet with the president of COPA to consult together on the preparations for the Annual Meeting and promote the 6th General Assembly to Mexican parliamentarians.

### 3. Other Activities

#### 3.1 Network Website

To increase the Network's visibility, we decided to set up a website specifically for the Network with a duly registered domain name of which it is sole owner. The site ([www.feminamericas.org](http://www.feminamericas.org)) features the new graphics developed for the Network by the Québec National Assembly's Communications Directorate.

The site currently features the Network's activities, reports, resolutions, document databanks, meeting summaries, announcements of upcoming activities, and useful links. I invite you to not only visit the site regularly, but contribute to it, since it is our preferred information and promotion instrument. Your comments and information will help us continue to improve the site.

#### 3.2 Document Databank Production and Distribution

Given the importance of the themes studied by the Network and the interest generated by the GAIA databank on gender budget analysis, I requested the Network's Secretariat to conduct the research required to create two new databanks, one on the impact of the FTAA on women and the other on the impact of migration on women in the context of hemispheric integration. These databanks contain theoretical and methodological documents on these issues and are available on our website. I invite you to consult them and continue to contribute to them by sending your suggestions on documents, references, and concrete measures taken by your parliaments and governments to the Network's Secretariat.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In conclusion, I would like to express my utmost optimism for the future of our Network, which is continually strengthening its foundation and raising its action profile. The most urgent challenge is permanent funding. Given the value of our work and the quality of our representatives, I am confident in our funding committee's ability to accomplish this mission. It will increase the number of Network activities, which will help to better equip women parliamentarians in the Americas and consequently have a real impact on the lives of women in this hemisphere. In closing, I wish you a successful Annual Meeting. Something else I would like to suggest that seems quite important to me is that we ask the United Nations—more specifically the Commission on the Status of Women—to confer a broader consultative role upon us, which would allow us to take an active, ongoing part in the examination of issues of concern to women.

I will conclude by reminding you that it is worth the struggle for a fairer, more egalitarian world, because as long as the problems of inequality between men and women persist, democracy throughout the hemisphere will suffer.

I am certain this assembly will be a success, especially thanks to the presence of each and every one of you, who bring so much life and joy to the Network.