



## **DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY OF THE NETWORK OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS**

### ***DESCRIPTION***

The Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas is a forum open to all of the continent's women legislators. Within the parliaments of the Americas, the Network fosters dialogue on issues related to the advancement of women in order to promote gender equity, peace and human development as well as the involvement of women in the decision-making processes of our societies.

The objectives of the Network are:

- to encourage the representation and action of women in the parliaments of the Americas, to foster the sharing of experience among them, and to promote solidarity among women in general;
- to ensure that both men and women parliamentarians take into consideration the rights and demands of women, from the viewpoint of the respect of human rights and a better distribution of wealth;
- to support the participation of women in the parliaments of the Americas and to create communication mechanisms for the activities of women parliamentarians.

The Network holds an Annual Meeting, preferably in conjunction with the General Assembly of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA). The Network works in close connection with COPA while remaining autonomous in the organization of events separate from those held by COPA.

### ***CREATION***

On the occasion of the first Parliamentary Conference of the Americas, held in Québec City in September 1997, a declaration proposing the creation of a "Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas" was presented. This initiative, made by the approximately forty women parliamentarians who participated in the Québec City Conference, was aimed at increasing the presence of women within parliaments, as well as ensuring that greater consideration is given to their concerns in the context of continental integration.

In order to implement this declaration, some thirty women parliamentarians met in May 1999 in La Antigua, Guatemala. They agreed to officially create the Network and to elect an Executive Committee. Based on a proposal by the Network, COPA resolved that delegations participating in the general Assemblies of COPA should from then on respect the principle of equity between men and women.

## **HISTORY**

The Network has been steadily developing and strengthening its structure since its creation in 1999.

The Network's principal achievements in its early years were: adopting its statutes and defining its areas of intervention. At its first Annual Meeting, held in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 2000, the Network had the opportunity to organize its first member training session, led by two experts, Yakin Ertürk, director of the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, and Gloria Rodriguez, President of MAPA Communications. During those years, the Network began regularly discussing current issues relating to women and adopting resolutions, which demonstrated the consensus and spirit of collaboration that characterized its meetings. The Network's next two meetings were held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2001 and Ixtapan de la Sal, Mexico in 2002.

Over the following years, the Network continued to strengthen its position, carrying out an in-depth examination of various themes relating to the status of women. This led to the production of discussion papers, reports and document databanks. Its first document databank (GAIA), on the analysis of budgets based on gender, was presented at its 4th Annual Meeting, held in Caracas, Venezuela in 2003.

At the subsequent Annual Meetings, in particular those held in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil in 2005, and Quito, Ecuador in 2006, the work themes focused on women and migration; the impact of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) on women; the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the Americas (CEDAW) and human trafficking in the Americas. Each theme was examined and explored through seminars and training and discussion workshops led by parliamentarians or specialists.

The most recent document databank, TRAFICAS, on the phenomenon of human trafficking in the Americas, was introduced at the Network's 7th Annual Meeting in Mexico (F.D.) in 2008, which brought together a record number of some 60 parliamentarians from 12 countries of the Americas. To ensure continuity, follow-up reports are often presented on previous work themes at Network meetings, as it is the case for the theme of violence against women. This theme has been the subject of a round table during the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, held in Salta, Argentina, and of a panel discussion during the Executive Committee meeting held in Toluca (Mexico), in March 2011.

Recently, the Network finished the analysis of the theme *Women's Participation in Politics*, that was studied for three years. Currently, both *Poverty, Pay Equity and the Economic Empowerment of Women* and *Water environment and status of women* are being studied.

In addition to its regular activities, the Network organizes events aimed at, among other things, promoting the Network in the parliaments of the Americas and in civil society. Examples of Network events include the Seminar on Human Trafficking held in Los Angeles in June 2007 and the Forum of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas held in Zacatecas, Mexico in September 2007. Occasionally, the Network collaborates with other organizations, as was the case for the 13th Latin American Congress on Sexology and Sexual Education held in Salvador (Bahia), Brazil in April 2006.

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

The Network is supported by an Executive Committee, members of which are elected for two years. It is composed of a President, a Vice-President and of two representatives from each of the five major regions of the Americas, namely North America, Central America, the Caribbean, the Andean Region and the Southern Cone. Four seats are also reserved for representatives of regional parliaments and interparliamentary organizations.

A woman parliamentarian from the National Assembly of Québec, the founding assembly of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas as well as the host institution of the Network Secretariat, has a seat on the Executive Committee. At the end of her term of office, if she continues to hold parliamentary office, the ex-President sits as a member of the Network Executive Committee for one additional term. Two representatives of the host assembly of the next General Assembly of COPA also sit on the Executive Committee of the Network in order to contribute to the organization of the Network's Annual Meeting.

The President of the Network also assumes one of the 11 vice-presidencies of COPA. The Vice-Président also sits on the Executive Committee of COPA.

The Network has had five presidents since its creation: Lyse Leduc, Member of the National Assembly of Québec (1999-2002), Ileana Rogel, Deputy of the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador (2002-2005), Aparecida Gama, Deputy of the Legislative Assembly of the State of Rio de Janeiro (2005-2008), Flor María Ríos, Member of the National Assembly of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (2008-2010) and Diva Hadamira Gastelum Bajo, Deputy of the Chamber of Deputies of the Congress of the Union (2010-2012).

## **WEBSITE**

For more information concerning our activities, consult the Network's website at [www.feminamericas.org](http://www.feminamericas.org). You will find:

- the list of members of the Executive Committee;
- the Statutes, Rules of procedure and Action Plan;
- the adopted recommendations;
- the program of upcoming activities;
- the document databanks developed on themes studied by the Network.

2012-07-06