

**News from
the
Network**

**News from
the
President**

**Studied
themes by the
Network
2010-2011**

**Articles
from the
members**



**NEWSLETTER OF THE NETWORK OF WOMEN
PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS**

JANUARY-MAY 2011



RED DE MUJERES PARLAMENTARIAS DE LAS AMERICAS



Network of women parliamentarians of the Americas

JANUARY-MAY 2011

PRESIDENT

DIVA HADAMIRA GASTELUM

FEDERAL MEMBER

Deputy Gastélum obtained a law degree from Occidente University in her home state of Sinaloa. She has a Master's degree in family law and diplomas in parliamentary law, public policy and women's rights, public administration, penal law and family law.

Since 1978, Gastélum has been affiliated with the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), where she has been a senior administrator of the women's branch at both the municipal and provincial levels, as well as a municipal, provincial and national political advisor. While on the Provincial Council of the party, she was the instigator of the reform for political recognition and gender equality in politics in the State of Sinaloa.



Gastélum was a local deputy in the 56th Legislature of the Congress of the State of Sinaloa. During that time, she chaired the Committee on Gender Equality and the Family, was Chair of the Board of the Congress. She distinguished herself as sponsor of the Law to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Family Violence (the first of its kind in Mexico).

While federal deputy in the 59th Legislature, Gastélum distinguished herself as co-sponsor of the General Law on the Access of Women to a Life Free From Violence and as the founder of the Centre for Studies on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality.

As local deputy in the 59th Legislature of the Congress of the State of Sinaloa, she was Chair of the Human Rights Committee. During that time, she worked on the constitutionalization of human rights and helped prepare the State of Sinaloa's first gender-specific budget.

Gastélum is currently a federal deputy in the 61st Legislature (2009-2012). As such, she presides over the Special Committee on Families.

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NEW FROM THE NETWORK

By the Secretariat of the Network

MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE NETWORK – MARCH 8, 2011, TOLUCA DE LERDO, STATE OF MEXICO, MEXICO

Last March 8, the members of the Executive Committee of the Network met in Toluca de Lerdo in the State of Mexico, Mexico. They adopted the *2010–2012 Work Plan of the Network* and made preparations for the Network's 10th Annual Meeting, to be held in Québec City in September. Network President Diva Hadamira Gastelum presented her report on the Network's main activities since the 9th Annual Meeting, held on November 16, 2010, in Mar del Plata, Argentina. Monique Richard of the National Assembly of Québec presented a report on the activities of the Québec Secretariat. The Executive Committee also adopted the *Declaration of Toluca* on violence against women. Participants had the opportunity to attend a presentation by Angelica de la Peña on the economic empowerment of women. This presentation was organized by the Network President in connection with the examination of the 2010–2012 themes adopted at the Network's last Annual Meeting.

The *Declaration of Toluca* recognizes that violence against women is one of the greatest obstacles to achieving true gender equity. It is thus crucial to put mechanisms in place to combat and eradicate violence against women. To that end, the declaration proposes implementing action plans that set out clear objectives, carrying out legislative reforms to protect women against all forms

of violence and implementing initiatives to raise public awareness of the issue.

The *2010-2012 Work Plan of the Network* proposes that the Network focus on three priorities during this period:

1. The themes adopted at the 9th Annual Meeting of the Network and follow-up on previous themes as well as themes proposed by the President of COPA;
2. Consolidation of the Network; and
3. Topical themes proposed by the Network's President.

The consolidation of the Network will be achieved first and foremost through the efficiency and active participation of the members of the Executive Committee, the increased participation of the parliamentarians of the Americas, both on local and national levels, and active participation in regional, continental and international forums and organizations in order to share experiences and successful measures with a view to raising awareness and creating legislation with respect to the study themes and ongoing work of the Network. In addition, topical themes will help identify measures to be adopted with respect to issues requiring the Network's immediate attention.

The Executive Committee also adopted the agenda for the 10th Annual Meeting of the Network. Items on the agenda include a presentation entitled: "*The Commitment of Women to a Better Future: Water, Poverty and Sustainable Development*", a round-table discussion on regional initiatives relating to the status of women,



and the presentation of a book entitled *Femmes du bicentenaire* (Women of the Bicentennial). Monique Richard will also present her report on *Changes in women's participation in politics 1999—2009*. These activities will undoubtedly contribute to the consolidation of the Network and enrich discussions on gender equity.

Original text in French

NETWORK'S ACTIVITIES CALENDAR



10TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE NETWORK:

Tuesday, September 6, 2011, in Québec City, Canada



NEWS AND THEMES FROM THE PRESIDENT

By the Secretariat of Mexico

CONTINENTAL ROUND TABLE: GENDER ALERT AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN – MARCH 8, 2011, TOLUCA DE LERDO, STATE OF MEXICO, MÉXICO

In collaboration with the members of the Executive Committee of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, Network President Diva Gastélum Bajo organized and coordinated the first continental round table on the theme



“Gender Alert and Violence Against Women”. The round table—held on March 8, International Women’s Day, which lent it even greater significance—was a resounding success and led to agreements of major importance for the whole continent.

The most salient conclusion to come out of the discussions was that the problem of violence against women—resulting in both homicides and femicides—is not exclusive to any one country or any given sector of society. It affects all countries alike and exhibits similar cultural, economic and institutional traits. Women are subjected

to violence in an estimated seven households out of 10 in the Americas, a figure validated by the seven countries represented on the panel. “Now is the time to speak out on behalf of the girls and women who account for half the population of our patriarchal continent,” declared Diva Hadamira Gastélum Bajo, adding that the problem is not simply one of legislation and that it is up to women parliamentarians to see that the entire legal context is adequate

The round table took place at the seat of the Congress of the Union of the United States of Mexico, which is in its 57th Legislature. Parliamentarians from Uruguay, Paraguay, Colombia, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Argentina, Québec (Canada), the Federal Congress of Mexico, the states of Chiapas, Mexico, Jalisco, Nuevo León, Zacatecas, Yucatán, Sinaloa, Chihuahua and the Federal District (Mexico City) numbered among the participants. Grassroots associations and civil society groups also in attendance sounded the alarm, calling attention to the high number of offences against women, and confirmed that most were committed within the family, often by the head of the household or the victim’s spouse.





“They tried to make us believe that women are the women’s enemy, but this is not true, they subjugate us to follow their patriarchal order.” and even if this problematic is not only a matter of

laws, it is to the responsibility of the legislators to make an adequate juridical framework, indicated Diva Hadimira Gastélum.

Paraguayan Deputy and Network Vice-President Emilia Alfaro de Franco described the phenomenon as being “rooted in the family environment and the social gender roles we are taught. This is where the seeds of these behaviours are sown and why some men become abusive.” In Paraguay, women and girls are the main victims of domestic violence. Two 15-year-olds out of 10 in Paraguay have either seen or heard their parents mistreat each other.

Mexican Deputy María del Rosario Brindis outlined the proposals currently being examined by the federal Chamber of Deputies to better combat the problem and defend women’s rights. These include making human trafficking a federal offence, designating femicide as an unbailable offence and extending the time frame for prosecuting all sexual offences and violence against minors, eliminating the issue of consent and making provision for cases involving incest.

Uruguayan Senator Carlos Baraibar cited examples of the headway made in his country on the legislative front. These

include the creation of a bicameral women’s caucus made up of deputies and senators from all political parties, the prohibition against employers requiring pregnancy tests, the unionization of women domestic workers, the requirement that each gender account for at least one third of the candidates in every election, gender wage equality and direct economic support for low-income women.

Argentinian National Deputy Gloria Bidegain pointed out that domestic violence was not much talked about before the 1970s as it was considered a private matter. Though she acknowledges some progress has been made, she feels much remains to be done as “gender violence isolates victims from the rest of society and denies them their rights as citizens”. She described femicide as absolute male domination exacerbated by “societal inadequacies” and unchecked by weak public institutions.

Costa Rican deputies Mireya Zamora and Ileana Brenes reported some improvements at the political level in their country with, among other things, the approval of a 50% electoral gender quota. Together with Monique Richard, a Member of the National Assembly of Québec, they expressed their conviction that education is the key to change. The





Québec delegate added that, in her province, one of the recommendations made after a public consultation was that students be given basic gender and sex education from the early grades right into high school.

Representing the Central American Parliament, María Esperanza Valle Buitrago, from Nicaragua, read a declaration by that authority reiterating its commitment to creating a parliamentary council for gender equality in Central America and the Caribbean, making its intention known and supporting all

regional, continental and international treaties and proclamations whose object is to advance women's rights and promote gender equality. She noted that some of the countries with the world's worst records of violence against women are found in Central America, namely, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador.

Original text in Spanish





"A HALT BY THE WAYSIDE" (International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust)

The event "A Halt by the Wayside" (Un alto en el Camino) was held in the Chamber of



Deputies on January 27, 2011, in remembrance of the victims of the Holocaust. During the official ceremony, the President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas paid tribute to the women of the Holocaust, highlighting their strength and their vital contribution to Jewish society.

WOMEN AND THE HOLOCAUST

Women, Jews and non-Jews alike, suffered an especially brutal fate at the hands of the Nazis, who built concentration camps or sectors within concentration camps exclusively for them.

Over three million girls and women were murdered during the Holocaust. Because the Nazi ideology called for the elimination of the Jewish "race", women, as the bearers of new life, were the prime targets of the genocide.

In May 1939, the Nazis opened Ravensbrück, the largest of these facilities.

By the time the camp was liberated in 1945, over 100,000 women had passed through its gates.

Neither women nor children were spared during the mass executions by the Nazis. In the Nazi-occupied Soviet territories, the women were shot alongside the men by the *Einsatzgruppen* (mobile extermination units).

Women, especially those with young children, were often the first to be sent to the gas chambers. Others were imprisoned and subjected to forced labour.

Nazi doctors used Jewish and Roma women as subjects for sterilization operations and other inhuman experiments.

Women detainees were especially vulnerable to harassment and rape. Those who became pregnant tried to hide the telltale signs or were forced to have an abortion.

Original text in Spanish





INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY – 100th ANNIVERSARY

Observed by the United Nations and a national holiday in many countries, International Women's Day (March 8) is celebrated by women around the world. When women from every continent join in this day's activities regardless of borders and ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic and political differences, they are continuing a struggle for equality, justice, peace and development that goes back 100 years, and thus keeping a legacy alive.

International Women's Day honours the ordinary women who changed our history and is rooted in women's centuries-old quest for recognition as men's equals in society. In ancient Greece, Lysistrata led a sex strike to end the war. During the French Revolution, the women of Paris who fought for "liberty, equality and fraternity" marched to Versailles to demand that women be given the right to vote.

The idea of celebrating an international women's day emerged in the late 19th century, a time marked by change and upheaval, exponential population growth and radical ideologies.

Original text in Spanish





2010-2012 NETWORK THEMES

By the Secretariat of the Network

At the 9th Annual Meeting of the Network, held on November 16, 2010, in Mar del Plata, Argentina, Network members adopted two themes for consideration in 2010—2012. One of these themes is *Poverty, Pay Equity and the Economic Empowerment of Women*. The economic empowerment of women is also one of the areas being given attention by the new *United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*, headed up by executive director Michelle Bachelet. The economic empowerment of women increases the possibility for women to make strategic life choices in a context where such possibilities were previously denied¹.

The economic empowerment of women is a theme that is closely linked to two important issues. First, it constitutes a way to fight poverty because, even today, women continue to bear a disproportionate burden of the world's poverty, in countries both in the north and in the south, largely due to social inequality and a lack of opportunity. Second, it leads to the broader question of how to achieve gender equality through, among other things, guaranteeing pay equity. In order to achieve gender equality, men and women must both have access to the same economic opportunities, and women must have the ability to act independently – not be economically dependent. More and more international organizations have recognized that the economic

empowerment of women is a prerequisite to gender equality.

In order to be equal, men and women must be in position to have the same economic opportunities and must be autonomous and non financially dependent. Moreover international organizations are increasingly adding women financial autonomy as one of their top priorities concerning gender equality.

In 2000, 189 United Nations member states adopted eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by 2015. The third MDG, which is to promote gender equality and empower women, has a special place among the MDGs, as it is an important means to achieve all MDGs. The United Nations believes that acting on MDG3 will facilitate attaining other MDGs such as the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, and improving maternal health. The United Nations Development Programme has identified three core areas that must be given priority in order to achieve the economic empowerment of women².

The first core area consists in expanding economic opportunities for women, which includes enhancing their employability and entrepreneurship, and involves promoting a financial sector that assures women access to financial products and credit tailored to their needs. Women experience much more difficulty than men when it comes to finding decent work. The share of employment of women working in the formal sector is less than that of men and

¹ *Innovative approaches to promoting women's economic empowerment*, United Nations Development Programme, 2008, p.9, <http://www.undp.org/women/publications/html>, page consulted May 5, 2011

² *Ibid.*



the average wage paid to women is also less than that of men for the same employment³. Women continue to face considerable obstacles in the labour market due to lack of education, inadequate access to jobs, and socio-cultural behaviours linked to the role of women in the workplace. The challenge is therefore to find ways to provide women with access to decent work. In addition, measures must be put in place to help women develop management and entrepreneurial skills.

The second core area consists in strengthening women's legal status as well as their rights in relation to land ownership, succession and inheritance. This involves, for example, ensuring that women's rights to land ownership are not restricted by social norms or customs, or, even, by legislation⁴. Improvements in this area will help reduce gender discrimination regarding access to resources such as land or property. Respect for the right of women to own land or to inherit has a direct impact on their financial security and ability to obtain access to credit.

Finally, the third core area concerns the participation and inclusion of women in economic decision-making and involves setting up mechanisms to increase their voice in public decision-making. This involves, for example, developing strategies to support the appointment of

women to decision-making positions in the public sector or establishing programs that strengthen and support women's networks and business associations, or again, promoting the representation of women within work organizations. The economic empowerment of women is considered part of the process of changing power relationships and gaining greater control over the sources of power. Having more women in decision-making positions, both in the public and private sectors, results in more consideration and respect being given to women's needs and rights. Expanding women's access to positions in political institutions is also one of the main objectives of the Network of Women.

In conclusion, increasing women's participation in the economy by assuring access to land, financial services and other resources will improve their status and contribute toward eradicating poverty in the world. To achieve this, obstacles impeding the economic empowerment of women must be eliminated by improving women's access to education and health care, reducing violence against women, increasing their participation in political life, and guaranteeing the rights and protection that all women need.

Original text in French

³ UN-WOMEN, *Facts and Figures*, [on line], <http://www.unwomen.org/fr/facts-figures/>, page consulted May 6, 2011

⁴ UN-HABITAT, *Guía para los Legisladores sobre los Derechos de la Mujer al Suelo, Propiedad y Vivienda en todo el Mundo*, http://www.onuhabitat.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=114&tmpl=component&format=raw&Itemid=69



Sources to consult on this subject:

Making the MDGs Work Better For Women, Implementing gender responsive National Development Plans and Programmes,
http://www.unifem.org/attachments/products/MakingTheMDGsWorkBetterForWomen_eng.pdf

Gender equality at the heart of decent work, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_105119.pdf

Gendering microfinance, <http://www.gdrc.org/icm/wind/binns-4.html>



THE BELLS OF INDEPENDENCE RING FOR PARAGUAY



Contributed by Mrs. **Émilia Alfaro de Franco**,

National Deputy of Paraguay

Vice-president of the Network

Juana María de Lara gave herself entirely to the cause of liberty and acted as go-between in Paraguay's independence movement, passing on information about the independence plan to Paraguayan patriots. The proximity of her residence to that of the Sáenz brothers, Pedro Pablo and Sebastián Martínez, where meetings were held in the greatest secrecy, made it easier for her to keep abreast of the latest developments and play an active role in the revolutionary movement.

On Sunday, May 14, 1811, on the orders of the rebel leaders, she made her way as usual to the Cathedral, which was the neighbourhood church, and knelt down beside the holy water fonts. As the revolutionaries entered, she informed them of changes in plans, new operations and their timing, and the password: "Independence or Death". She also contacted the soldiers assigned to guard the barracks and paid visits to others loyal to the cause, bolstering their spirits and passing along the latest news.

In the course of the morning of May 15, when it was clear that the revolution had succeeded, Juana María de Lara returned to the barracks to celebrate the liberation of her homeland with the chief figures of Paraguayan independence.

Juana María de Lara: Prominent Figure in Paraguayan Independence

National deputy Emilia Alfaro de Franco introduced a bill to officially recognize Juana María de Lara as "a prominent figure in Paraguay's independence" for her participation and contribution to the crucial events that led to Paraguay's independence from Spain. The bill was passed by the State of Paraguay on November 29, 2010, as Act 4.082/10.

In December 2010, the Minister of Education and Culture announced that all graduates of Paraguay's educational institutions that year would be known as the "Juana María de Lara: Prominent Figure in Paraguay's Independence" graduating class.

When introducing the bill, Emilia Alfaro de Franco stated that the Bicentennial is an opportunity not only to celebrate the landmark events in our country's independence, but also to reflect on our national identity and to right historical wrongs, whether of commission or omission.

Non-discrimination is a recognized value of Paraguayan society and the Paraguayan State, enshrined in our National Constitution (article 46). However, looking back on our history and our decisions, we realize that women have been victims of discrimination, excluded from the history books to the point of invisibility. This constitutes a complex



mechanism of dissimulation that minimizes, indeed denigrates, women's contribution to society.

Experience has shown that, throughout our history, such dissimulation has been one of the most blatant ways in which we have denied Paraguayan women their rightful place. The bill is therefore aimed at reviving the name of Juana María de Lara as a prominent figure in the events of May 1811, thus setting to right her unjust exclusion from the group of illustrious people who

actively participated in and contributed to our country's independence.

For these reasons, I ask the members of this honourable Chamber to recognize Juana María de Lara as a prominent figure in Paraguay's independence and to spare no effort to pay homage to her in the textbooks, museum exhibitions and educational programs of the Department of Education and Culture.

Original text in Spanish



PINK COLOURED LEGISLATION OR WOMEN'S PLATING



Contributed by Mrs. **Norma Esparza Herrera**,

Senator of the Congress of the Union of the United Mexican States

Representative of the Network for North America

Discrimination against women is a subtle and persistent reality of everyday life. It is also elemental, one more form of marginalization added to so many others. Many consider discrimination against women as the most violent form of discrimination, since it is manifested both physically and psychologically.

As parliamentarians who span the political spectrum, we have relegated this day-to-day discrimination to secondary standing in order to focus on the consolidation of democracy in a modern constitutional State—a focus that encompasses gender equity in all its forms.

My purpose today is not to give a protracted account of the multiple causes of gender inequality, but rather to examine discrimination against women in politics with particular reference to the gender gap that continues to exist in legislative bodies. This sensitive question is of the highest importance for parliaments throughout the world.

For example, only 138 of Mexico's 500 deputies are women. Only 30 of its 128 senators are women, and this includes women who hold the office as

substitutes.⁵ It is sad to have to report that this reality may be observed in all bodies of the Mexican Federation and, I am sure, in many other countries.

The figures I have just cited testify to women's under-representation in our legislative bodies. It is no secret that in the world as a whole, but more particularly in Latin America, such representation is heavily skewed in favour of men.

It need hardly be said that equal political representation as promulgated in our constitutions and electoral laws is no more than a dead letter because there are not enough women legislators in our parliamentary bodies.

While it is true that the law requires that women have equal access to public office, we must also ensure that, once achieved, their situation is secured, and this is best done through normative tools guaranteeing that women maintain their presence in legislative assemblies and are able to make their voices heard there. We might require, for instance, that each substitute legislator be of the same gender as the legislator he or she replaces. Is it appropriate here to talk about affirmative action?

⁵ Web pages of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of the General Congress of the United States of Mexico.



To be sure, affirmative action, whether in the form of guidelines, quotas or other measures, will soon be rendered unnecessary. As the situation now stands, however, legislative measures favouring women must be adopted, the legal framework fostering gender equity in political representation must be reinforced, and gender quotas must be increased, all with a view to maintaining elected women legislators in their positions and ridding society of long-standing misconceptions and prejudices.

Affirmative action legislation requiring that women legislators be replaced by women substitutes is not an ideal solution in the case of Congress representatives. Yet such a measure is indispensable, at least until democratic practices are such as to render this kind of positive discrimination unnecessary.

Mexican legislators of all political parties, in both the Lower House and the Senate, have vowed to defend the rights of duly elected women representatives.

We have all of us, in co-operation with our male colleagues and abetted by our political institutions, become acutely aware of how important it is that we be strongly represented in our democratic institutions. And, to increase women's presence in the General Congress, we have also decided to support a quota system.

It is our duty to protect the interests of the people who elected us, but neither must we lose sight of the fact that more than half the people in the world are women.

The Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas believe that women's

integration and participation in the economy hinges on their ability to gain equal access to education at all levels. Such access must be grounded in regulatory measures to encourage women's participation and guarantee fair access to whatever field they choose to enter.

A bias subsists in our democratic model as it presently stands; that is why we need pro-equity standards that will remain operative until our societies achieve genuine democratic equity. Such measures must be in keeping with the aims of positive discrimination that facilitate the equal representation of women. They will continue to serve their purpose for as long as vulnerable groups are victims of discrimination, after which time they will have outgrown their usefulness.

The gender-equity legislation so urgently needed must also apply to legislative assemblies themselves. This will show not only that women are continuing to fight for their rightful place in our democratic institutions, but also that they are fully capable of making laws and of governing.

In politics, gender-equity measures must eliminate factors that contribute to inequality, under-representation and exclusion in our institutions, taking into account the composition and population of the country concerned. These measures should be viewed as compulsory, albeit temporary, measures.

Establishing electoral gender quotas is a progressive trend that is finding favour with an increasing number of parliaments throughout the world.



In the current situation, it will be impossible to close the gender gap unless pro-active measures are introduced based on our public policies in education, economic development, and pro-equity regulations. In the final analysis, such legislation ought to ensure that a full program of affirmative action is in place.

Original text in Spanish



EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK: QUÉBEC PAY EQUITY INITIATIVES



Contributed by Mrs. **Monique Richard**,

Member of the National Assembly of Québec

Representative of the founding and host assembly of the
Network Secretariat

Despite noteworthy advances in recent decades, gender-based wage discrimination is an ongoing problem across the globe. According to statistics compiled by the International Labour Organization, women in most countries earn 10% to 30% less than men, and the disparity is even more pronounced in some Asian and Latin American countries.⁶ Overall, in most regions and professions, women are paid less than men for the same work or work of equal value.

It goes without saying that bridging the wage gap is key to achieving gender equality. Narrowing that gap is fundamental to women obtaining the financial autonomy required to break the cycle of economic dependence and fight poverty, exploitation and violence. In addition to conditions conducive to integrating women into the labour market, measures are required to guarantee fair and equitable treatment for both men and women in the workplace. To achieve this, mechanisms must be established to guarantee pay equity and equal pay.⁷

In Québec, various initiatives have been taken to achieve pay equity. Already in the 1970s, the introduction of new provisions in the *Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* made equal pay a fundamental right.⁸ This initiative represented more than a simple improvement of a condition of employment or the introduction of an additional labour standard.⁹ However, prohibiting wage discrimination in the Charter did not guarantee full pay equity, and it became necessary to adopt more specific provisions. Towards the end of the 1980s, the anti-wage discrimination movement began to attract significant attention with the demands put forward by the *Coalition en faveur de l'équité salariale*, which fought to obtain proactive pay equity legislation. In 1992, the *Commission des droits de la personne* tabled a report recognizing the limitations of section 19 of the Québec Charter as a means of eliminating discrimination, especially in the case of non-unionized female workers. In 1995, some 850 women supported demands for proactive legislation by taking part in a 10-day March for Bread and Roses and calling for nine specific

⁶ *Global Wage Report 2008/09*, (Geneva, BIT, 2008); http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/WCMS_100786/lang--en/index.htm.

⁷ Equal pay means equal pay for equal work, while pay equity means equal pay for work that is different but of equal value. *Commission de l'équité salariale du Québec*, <http://www.ces.gouv.qc.ca/>.

⁸ *Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*, section 19.

⁹ *L'équité salariale : un droit fondamental encore inachevé* (Pay equity: a fundamental right not yet fully acquired), brief presented by Marie-Thérèse Chicha, Ester Déom and Hélène Lee-Gosselin on the report by the Minister of Labour on the implementation of the *Pay Equity Act* (2006), January 31, 2008.



economic measures. The participants were joined in front of the Québec Parliament by 15,000 additional supporters.

Finally, in 1996, the *Pay Equity Act* was unanimously adopted by the National Assembly of Québec in order to “redress differences in compensation due to the systemic gender discrimination suffered by persons who occupy positions in predominantly female job classes”.¹⁰ All employers with 10 or more employees became subject to the Act, which also provided for the creation of the *Commission de l'équité salariale*. The Commission was entrusted with decision-making and support roles in achieving pay equity in Québec, and is responsible for overseeing the implementation and maintenance of pay equity in all enterprises subject to the Act.¹¹

By 2006, nearly 10 years after the *Pay Equity Act* came into force, 68% of the enterprises concerned, though only 47% of private sector enterprises, had completed the pay equity process.¹² The Act was amended in June 2009 with a view to strengthening it and ensuring that it was properly implemented. An advisory committee composed of union and labour representatives was established to give its opinion on matters submitted to it by the Minister of Labour or the *Commission de l'équité salariale* with respect to the implementation of the Act. In addition, the notion of indemnity was introduced to allow women to receive, in addition to their

regular wages, a retroactive amount calculated from the time their employer should have completed the pay equity process. Finally, to improve enforcement of the Act, stricter fines were introduced for non-compliant enterprises.

Original text in French

¹⁰ *Pay Equity Act*, section 1.

¹¹ *Commission de l'équité salariale du Québec*, <http://www.ces.gouv.qc.ca/commission/mission.asp>.

¹² *Report by the Minister of Labour on the implementation of the Pay Equity Act* (French only), <http://www.ces.gouv.qc.ca/documents/publications/rapp-2006.pdf>.



A MEMBER OF THE NETWORK OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS APPOINTED PRESIDENT OF THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN



Contributed by Mrs. **Mireya Zamora Alvarado**,

Member of the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica

Regional Representative for Central America for the Network

San José, Costa Rica – On Thursday, May 19, 2011, Member of Parliament and member of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas Executive Committee Mireya Zamora Alvarado was named President of the Select Standing Committee on Women of the Legislative Assembly of the Republic of Costa Rica, for the 2011–2012 period.

The Committee on Women studies and gives opinions on bills related to the status of women and women's issues. It examines social problems tied to women's living conditions and human rights, with a view to amending the current legislation accordingly and exercising appropriate policy oversight of any government action taken.

During the last year in the legislature, MP Zamora Alvarado participated in the forum as the Committee's Secretary, and is thus able to conclude that her own *"experience will be a key resource in easing the transition toward the new legislative period."*

Ms. Zamora Alvarado adds that, *"this year, one of my missions is to bring a regional dimension to the Committee, one that lets it meet the needs of women equitably by getting closer to their communities and*

work alongside all those women who, day after day, are faced with the problems being discussed and examined in the legislative sphere."

When it comes to this goal, she acknowledges that *"it may be an ambitious project, but it is one I am undertaking with the conviction that, by the end of the current legislative period, we will have succeeded in bringing out the Committee's human side through our unwavering quest for greater gender equality for Costa Rican women."*

Furthermore, the MP also maintains that, as a member of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, her role as President of the Committee will enable her to *"strengthen the friendships and working relationships that unite us, and to foster greater dialogue among committees and other parliamentary women's groups surrounding their experiences."*

Original text in Spanish



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Americas**

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