



IInd ANNUAL MEETING OF THE NETWORK OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS

Rio de Janeiro, November 18, 2001

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

Some 80 women parliamentarians from 20 countries participated in the 2nd Annual Meeting of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas this past November 18, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. During the meeting, the participants:

1. Participated in a thematic workshop on the contribution of women to the democratic process, led by Ms. Lucia Helena Carvalho, Member of the Legislative Assembly of the Federal District of Brazil and member of the Network Executive Committee. The discussion began with speeches by Ms. Benedita da Silva, Vice-Governor of the State of Rio de Janeiro and by Ms. Emilia Hernandez, Senator of the Federal Congress of Brazil, who presented a brief overview of the Brazilian situation.

Ms. da Silva underlined that women in politics have as their role to invert the logic of power, which is primarily masculine, and the characteristics of which thus far have not made it possible to increase equity and equality in society. Moreover, since the international women's year in 1975, the participation of women has increased in political parties and in governments, and these women have demonstrated their ability to organize actions to eliminate hunger and misery. Also, women are gradually organizing at the grass-roots level, in the shanty towns.

Ms. Hernandez emphasized the fact that much ground remains to be covered to achieve equality between men and women, since thousands of women are still the victims of discrimination. Their absence from the decision-making mechanisms imposes situations upon them which perpetuate their exploitation and their impoverishment. Yet women possess excellent skills in administration and in public representation. They wish to take advantage of these qualities to conquer their own space within parliamentary institutions in order to improve democracy and give renewed credibility to parliamentarians.

The participants then discussed the situation in their respective countries regarding the participation of women in politics.

2. Amended the Network's Constitution. In particular, the amendments grant 4 seats to regional parliaments and interparliamentary organizations of the Americas within the Executive Committee, and specify the Network's autonomy within COPA.
3. Adopted a recommendation on the contribution of women to the democratic process and to peace. That document recognizes the positive contribution of women to a culture of peace and to the defence of human rights. In particular, it promotes the use of women's leadership in the circles of power, for the purpose of disseminating this vision, to change the priorities of parliaments accordingly, to stimulate equitable representation between men and women, and to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination. Finally, the recommendation suggests fostering the visibility of women's work through mass media, and including gender-related considerations in the legislation of parliaments in order to achieve complete and effective equality.
4. Attended a presentation on the results of the Inter-American Training Network "Women and Development", was given by Ms. Patricia Gudiño, Executive Director of the College of the Americas. It was agreed to continue the collaboration between the two networks in order to provide training to women for the purpose of increasing their representation in politics.
5. Received an offer of financial and logistical support from representatives of UNESCO in the framework of the program of partnership with parliamentarians.
6. Took notice of a recommendation submitted by Ms. Velma Veloria, Representative of the State of Washington, United States, for initiatives to be taken to counteract the trafficking in women and children, in view of the fact that this problem is the third largest clandestine economic activity in the world, after the illegal selling of arms and drugs.
7. Elected the new Executive Committee, with the following membership:

President:

Ms. Lyse Leduc
Member of the National Assembly of Québec

Regional representatives:

North America

Ms. María Elena Chapa, Member of the
Federal Congress of Mexico

Vacant seat

Central America

Ms. Ileana Rogel, Member of the Legislative
Assembly of El Salvador

Vacant seat

Antilles

Ms. Velda González de Modestti, Vice-
President of the Senate of Puerto Rico

Ms. Sergia Altagracia Santiago Méndez,
Member of the House of Representatives
of the Dominican Republic

Andean Region

Ms. Elisabeth Ochoa, Member of the
Congress of Ecuador

Ms. Iris María Varela, Member of the National
Assembly of Venezuela

Southern Cone

Ms. Elisa Carca, Senator of the Province
of Buenos Aires, Argentina

Ms. Lúcia Helena Carvalho, Member of the
Legislative Assembly of the Federal District
of Brazil

**Interparliamentary organizations and
regional parliaments**

Ms. Lucy Arce, representative for the
National Council of State Legislatures
(NCSL)

Ms. Nidia Díaz, Representative of the
Central American Parliament

Ms. Adela Muñoz de Liendo, Representative
of the Andean Parliament

Ms. María Silvia Varg de Nioi, representative
for the Parliamentary Union of Mercosur

Next Host Assembly

Ms. Hortencia Aragón, Member of the Federal
Congress of Mexico

Ms. Rocio García, Member of the Federal
Congress of Mexico

