

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE NETWORK OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS**

Quebec City, April 16 and 17, 2001

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

The members of the Executive Committee of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, together with a number of women representatives of parliamentary assemblies of the Americas, gathered in Quebec City on April 16 and 17, 2001. This meeting provided an opportunity for some 25 participants from 12 countries to debate the place of women in the process of economic integration of the Americas, and to identify paths of action open to them in order to be involved in this process and to participate fully in it.

The day before the beginning of deliberations, on April 16, 2001, five members of the Network attended the Forum on "Women and Globalization", of the Peoples' Summit. On this occasion, the women parliamentarians held discussions with the women participating in the Forum, and took note of their concerns and demands in connection with the phenomenon of globalization and of the integration of the Americas. The participants in this Forum proposed, in particular, to demand that the negotiations on the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) be halted until the impacts of globalization on women have been properly assessed and understood.

On the following day, during the formal meeting of the Network, two guest speakers from the Forum came to give the participants a presentation on women and globalization. They presented different ways of ensuring that the needs and interests of women are taken into account in an eventual free trade agreement. The guest speakers, Marceline White and Ritu Sharma, represented Women's Edge, an organization based in Washington D.C. that is carrying on both lobbying campaigns to the American Congress, and public awareness campaigns on the impact of globalization on the living conditions of women.

A discussion between the members of the Executive Committee on the impacts of the FTAA followed this presentation. They quickly established a distinction between their position and that defended by the participants in the Forum on "Women and Globalization": instead of demanding a halt to the negotiations because of a lack of transparency and out of concern for the social risks involved, the members of the Committee instead believed that it was preferable to adopt a proactive attitude, and to use all forums available to them to influence the centres of decision-making and of negotiation. Moreover, they reaffirmed that the action of COPA and of the Network must not be limited only to the establishment of a future free trade area of the Americas, but must also continue in close connection with all integration processes within the hemisphere.

This meeting also provided an opportunity for an update on the achievements of the Network with regard to the Plan of Action adopted at the Puerto Rico General Assembly. In addition, an overview of the situation presented by each member of the Network Executive Committee made it possible to observe that its creation has strengthened the initiative of women parliamentarians and the advancement of legislation concerning the improvement of living conditions for women, in their respective parliaments.

In addition, the women parliamentarians urged the Heads of State and Government of the Americas to create a working group to analyse the socioeconomic benefits of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, in particular by studying the living conditions of women, and agreed to hold information and awareness activities on the FTAA, for their respective populations, and more specifically directed toward women. This second activity echoes an initiative adopted at the IInd General Assembly of COPA, held in Puerto Rico in July 2000, aiming to organize consultations of the populations in order to be informed of their opinions on the FTAA project, and to urge the representatives of the executive authorities responsible for trade negotiations to keep parliamentarians informed of the state of advancement of negotiations.

In order to consolidate the action of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, the members of the Executive Committee agreed to promote the action of the Network and of COPA to those countries that have participated less in the activities of the organization, to create a working group on financing, and to include women representatives of the regional parliaments within their Executive Committee.

The participants at the meeting of the Network Executive Committee concluded their deliberations by adopting a declaration concerning the impacts of the FTAA on the lives of women.