



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

Isla Margarita, Venezuela, 22 February, 2003

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

The meeting of the Executive Committee of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, chaired by Salvadoran Representative Ileana Rogel, brought together the representatives elected¹ at the IIIrd Annual Meeting, as well as some twenty observers from about ten countries, in Isla Margarita, Venezuela.

Ms. Laura Pavón Jaramillo, retiring president of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA), Ms. Jhannett Madriz Sotillo, First Vice-President and host of the Executive Committee meeting, and the President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, in turn welcomed the participants. Ms. Pavón Jaramillo officially declared open the deliberations of this IVth meeting of the Network Executive Committee.

During this meeting, the elected representatives reported on the most recent legislative measures and initiatives relating to women's rights that have been proposed or adopted in their respective parliaments. The representatives also reported on their actions to foster greater extension of the Network. A few observers reported on progress made in their legislative assemblies in terms of legislation on the status of women.

The President of the Network reported on her official visit to Québec City, from February 3 to 7, 2003, where she was able to meet with Ms. Louise Harel, President of the National Assembly of Québec, who reiterated her parliament's commitment to house the Network Secretariat and to work toward the consolidation of this Network. During her visit, Ms. Rogel held work sessions with the staff of the Secretariat to conduct preparations for the next meeting of the Executive Committee. She was also able to meet with a number of representatives of government institutions and organizations devoted to the advancement of the status of women in Québec.

¹ Absent:
the North American regional representative, Ms. Deborah Hudson, Member of the House of Representatives of the State of Delaware, United States of America;
the regional representative of the Southern Cone, Ms. Elisa Carca, Senator of the Province de Buenos Aires, Argentina;
the regional representative of the Andean Region, Ms. Iris María Varela Rangel, Member of the National Assembly of Venezuela;
the regional representative of the Joint Parliamentary Committee of Mercosur, Ms. Adriana Coirini, Senator of the Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The report of proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Network, held in Ixtapan de la Sal, on November 24, 2002, was sent to the members of the Executive Committee in January. It will be published in full in the proceedings of the COPA Annual Meeting. Following a minor amendment, the representatives approved the report of proceedings of the Executive Committee meeting held in Ixtapan de la Sal on November 25, 2002.

The representatives then read, discussed and approved each section of the Network's Plan of Action (appended), and in particular, made the following decisions concerning each line of intervention:

1. The representatives unanimously passed the motion that the Network should rely on the individual and collective leadership of the members. Moreover, they reaffirmed their willingness to foster discussion among them as well as information sharing.
2. The members of the Executive Committee decided to equip themselves with the necessary resources to further their knowledge on the theme of gender budgets. A special section on this theme will be created in the document databank that is accessible on the Network's web site. It was agreed that an article on this theme should be written for the next issue of COPA magazine. It was proposed that a follow-up on this theme should be done at each annual meeting for the next two years.
3. It was agreed to foster the organizing of thematic seminars in order to enable members of the Network to benefit from training sessions adapted to their needs. For this year, the Network Executive Committee affirmed its commitment to collaborate in the organizing of the "Seminar on Gender Budgets" organized by the Committee on Women, Childhood, Youth and Family of the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN), which will take place in the next few months.
4. The representatives reaffirmed their intention of being proactive in their efforts to solicit international donors in order to set up a special fund aiming to finance special projects and activities put forward by the Network. They approved a draft letter to request funding. Although the official letter bears the signature of the President, official Network letterhead was provided to each of the representatives, to enable them to contact potential financial backers directly. It was agreed that each member would inform the responsible staff member at the Network Secretariat of the steps taken, and would call on the latter for support if necessary. Promotional material in support of the requests will be developed by the Secretariat.
5. In order to foster increased participation by women parliamentarians in the Network's activities, it was agreed to contact those parliamentary assemblies having little representation within the Network. To this end, the members undertook to send lists of women parliamentarians whom it would be suitable to contact, and a letter will be sent to the presiding officers of the parliamentary assemblies. In addition, invitations will be sent to various women's organizations, inviting them to attend the annual meetings and thematic activities as observers.

6. The representatives expressed the wish for continuing improvement of the Network Internet site. They reaffirmed their willingness to send the Secretariat legislative texts connected with improving the status of women, produced by their parliaments, and expressed their appreciation to those who had already done so. An appeal was also launched to ensure that any document prepared by the members and connected with the Network's lines of intervention should be sent to the Secretariat to be placed online on the Web.
7. It was resolved to increase the Network's visibility. In addition to publishing articles in COPA Magazine, it was proposed that a communication plan be developed in order to inform journalists and the population of the Network's activities, and to disseminate the analyses developed within it.
8. It was unanimously decided to increase discussion between women parliamentarians and women's organizations in various countries in order to pool efforts to advance the status of women. A motion to invite a number of organizations as observers at the upcoming activities and meetings of the Network was passed.
9. The members of the Executive Committee resolved to support the legislative assemblies interested in developing an internship program or a mentorship program for female university students or women wishing to enter a political career. It was requested that those Assemblies which implement such an internship program present a report on their experience at the next Annual Meeting.
10. The members of the Executive Committee unanimously reiterated their commitment to chair the Working Group on Health and Social Development within COPA. Ms. Rogel chairs this committee, with administrative support from the Network Secretariat.

The members of the Network took advantage of the opportunity at this meeting to express their sincere gratitude to Ms. Lyse Leduc, Member of the National Assembly of Québec, retiring president of the Network, for her leadership in creating the Network and for her contribution to the advancement of the status of women in the Americas. Ms. Leduc announced that she will soon be withdrawing from politics.

The elected representatives also unanimously approved the assignment of a seat on the Network Executive Committee to the host assembly of their Secretariat.

An agreement was signed between Ms. Ileana Rogel, President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, and Ms. Louise Harel, President of the National Assembly of Québec. This agreement provides that the National Assembly of Québec will continue to support the Network by housing its Secretariat.

The members of the Executive Committee approved five recommendations²: the first in favour of world peace, another supporting the quest for peaceful and democratic solutions to the crisis in Venezuela, a recommendation in support of aboriginal women, another on International Women's Day, and finally, an agreement to exchange information on gender-related issues.

Finally, they chose the themes for the workshops at the next Annual Meeting, namely the impacts of the Free Trade Area of the Americas on women, and the effects of migrations on women in the context of hemispheric integration.

² See appended recommendations.