

## **PRESIDENCY OF THE GROUP OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS - FIPA**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE 2009-2011 REPORT**

**This executive summary is presented to FIPA's Executive Committee, and it is available for the parliamentarians of the 35 member countries of the organization.<sup>1</sup>**

#### **I. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE GROUP OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS**

The **Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas**, as the sole permanent group of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA), soon ParlAmericas, devotes its work to one of FIPA's biggest concerns within the hemispheric agenda: the political strengthening of women parliamentarians and their legislative practice.

As a part of FIPA-ParlAmericas, and within its institutional methodology, the Group of Women Parliamentarians has met regularly since 2003 at events which have been either training seminars or conferences.

In November 2009, during the 5th FIPA's Executive Committee meeting in Ottawa, I – as Assembly Member of Ecuador – was awarded the responsibility of presiding over the Group of Women Parliamentarians. Since then, I have put my efforts in organizing two international events for the 35 member countries. I have also created other working templates and future projects, to be developed by the parliamentarians.

This 2009-2011 work report takes into account essential management issues and declares:

- That FIPA's Group of Women aims to: strengthen the leadership of women politicians through permanent regional exchange actions; promote the creation of conditions for equality of opportunities by prioritizing the fight against poverty and the elimination of employment discrimination; strengthen democracy in each country of the Americas in order

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<sup>1</sup> The complete version can be found on the blog of the Group of Women Parliamentarians: [http://asambleanacional.gov.ec/blogs/mujeres\\_americanas/](http://asambleanacional.gov.ec/blogs/mujeres_americanas/)  
An interactive CD is also available.

to achieve the validity of human rights and conditions that stimulate an equitable and sustainable social development; promote the creation of mechanisms that stimulate women's participation in politics; strengthen the active participation of women in FIPA's working meetings in order to include a gender perspective in each of the issues analyzed by the organization.

- That the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas meets every year to address a special subject matter that will be analyzed at FIPA's Forum.

In this regard, the two-year work report considers:

- CONFERENCES OF THE GROUP OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS
- PRESIDENT'S ADMINISTRATION - DOCUMENTS PRODUCED
- CONFERENCES OF THE GROUP OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF FIPA'S 7TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY, MEXICO 2010 AND FIPA-PARLAMERICAS' 8TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY, PARAGUAY 2011.

## II. CONFERENCES OF THE GROUP OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS

### 2.1 First conference: "Women in Power: Challenges for the 21st Century"

Two conferences were organized by the Presidency of the Group of Women Parliamentarians. The first one was "**Women in Power: Challenges for the 21st Century**", which took place in Quito, on August 12th and 13th, 2010. Forty-four women parliamentarians from 17 different countries of the Americas participated in this conference.

It was an opportunity to bring together important presentations given by male and female researchers from the hemisphere, as well as women who perform activities in the political field. There were high-quality speakers.

This important conference ended with a document named *Quito's Declaration*, which has 11 points regarding the commitment to strengthening parliamentary actions in order to actually fulfil women's rights. The document intends to establish agreements between men and women in order to promote social transformation, strengthen the empowerment of women, and build secular states that respect women's diversity and specificity for their benefit.

This Declaration also promotes the signing, ratification and observance of international agreements regarding children, adolescents and women; and the supervision of public bodies with respect to the fulfilment of women's rights within the framework of their competences.

Finally, it aims to assure that men and women have equal access to processes of social communication in order to eliminate sexist and discriminatory contents through an approach committed to achieve the full exercise of women's rights, their diffusion and defence.

## 2.1 Second conference: "Women's Political Leadership: Action Plan for the Americas"

The second conference organized by the President of the **Group of Women Parliamentarians** took place on June 30th and July 1st, 2011. It was also addressed to the 35 countries of the Americas, and it was presented as a training conference.

The important participation of parliamentarians from the Caribbean at the Quito conference showed the need for bringing the continent and the Caribbean islands closer together. The conference was organized in spite of economic, geographic and logistical difficulties – it was decided to work on the Caribbean due to its distant location. The successful unfolding of the event is owed to the decisive support from the Dominican Republic Chamber of Deputies; and from funders, such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), governmental institutions in Ecuador and the Dominican Republic that sponsored the event, as well as Ecuadorean, Haitian and Dominican NGOs that provided monetary support. The performance of FIPA's technical team also must be recognized.

For the Group of Women Parliamentarians, bringing the event to Dominican Republic meant the promotion of an ongoing integration of women parliamentarians from the Caribbean islands, not only to the Group of Women Parliamentarians, but also to FIPA's work. Furthermore, it was a symbolic but representative way of collaborating with the rebuilding of Haiti.

Considering natural catastrophes as phenomena that are detrimental to the normal development of nation-states, and that these phenomena reverse advances that have been achieved, the Group of Women Parliamentarians followed its president's initiative and decided to work in Dominican Republic.

The event "**Women's Political Leadership: Action Plan for the Americas**" took place in Santo Domingo, where approximately 80 congresswomen and several congressmen represented 14 countries of the Americas. It must be underlined that one of our aims was accomplished: all women parliamentarians from Haiti and almost all women parliamentarians from the Chamber of Deputies of the host country attended the event. Furthermore, there were some congressmen who demonstrated their conviction that working for women's rights is a task that should be undertaken by both men and women together.

The academic level of the conference was reflected in the high-quality performances shown by the 9 speakers – who were either academicians or politicians – from 7 different countries. They demonstrated knowledge about the women's current situation in the hemisphere, shared their experience and expertise with the parliamentarians, and created a space for exchanging ideas during the long debates that followed the lectures.

"**Women's Political Leadership: Action Plan for the Americas**" had 3 objectives: Firstly, **to Strengthen** political participation of women parliamentarians through participative experiences of other women who are related to political and/or academic activities. (Special emphasis in the Caribbean region). Secondly, **to Understand** the challenges of current democratic systems, in order to assure a substantive participation of women in the construction of national public policies. And finally, **to Establish** strategic geographical links, in order to build common networks according to regional objectives.

It was proposed to achieve these aims through the development of the following thematic lines: Leadership and Political Empowerment. The Challenges of the Democratic System regarding Gender Equity in Political Participation. Equity and Alternation Law. An Overview of the Situation in the Caribbean Countries. International Context: World Day of Social Justice (UN Declaration) and The Year of the Afro-descendants. There was a line of general reflection: *the phenomenon of migration*.

This event produced an outcome that answers to the objectives initially proposed, considering the title of the conference "**Women's Political Leadership: Action Plan for the Americas**". A first document was produced; it contains an Action Plan divided in 4 cornerstones: Political Agenda, Legislative Agenda, Training and Education Agenda, and Communication Agenda.

All participants worked on this document, and the feedback given by congresswomen and congressmen made consensus possible.

In addition to the Action Plan, and as a result of the Round Table dedicated to the current situation in Haiti, a manifesto of support to women politicians in this country was also produced.

It must be underlined that another benefit resulting from this event was an advance in the talks regarding economic issues for the future. After having obtained the support of governmental and non-governmental organizations which assisted with the event "Political Leadership", conversations with respect to the signature of economic cooperation agreements with the UN Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) progressed.

Furthermore, there are advanced negotiations with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID, for its initials in Spanish) and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation-ILDIS (Latin American Institute of Social Research).

### III. **CONFERENCES OF THE GROUP OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF FIPA'S 7TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY, MEXICO 2010 AND FIPA-PARLAMERICAS' 8TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY, PARAGUAY 2011.**

#### **3.1 Working Group during the Seventh Plenary Assembly - Mexico 2010**

In addition to the two conferences that were organized during the 2009-2011 administration, the Group of Women Parliamentarians Sixth Meeting – within the framework of FIPA's Seventh Plenary Assembly – took place on November 17th and 18th, 2010, in Mexico City.

Delegates from Canada, Chile, Dominica, Ecuador, Haiti, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Trinidad & Tobago participated in this meeting.

The expert guest was Panamanian Gloria Young, the Director of the Centre of Studies and Competencies in Gender. Her lecture, "Advances, Difficulties and Challenges for Afro-Caribbean Women with Respects to Participation in Electoral Politics" opened the debate about belonging and identity of women regarding their ethnic, social, and gender groups.

The outcomes of this meeting were some recommendations that have already started to be put into practice.

### 3.2 Working Group during the Eighth Plenary Assembly - Paraguay 2011

All of us are now gathered in Paraguay, at the workshop "**Gender Perspectives in Citizen Security Matters**", with Mexican expert Teresa Ulloa Ziáurriz, Regional Director of the civic association Coalition against Trafficking in Women and Girls in Latin America and the Caribbean (CATWLAC). We will have the chance to focus on Citizen Security through the lens of human rights as the essential base that ensures human prosperity and decent living conditions for all women and men, as well as governability and democracy, elements that make up the job of congresswomen and congressmen throughout the continent.

The main issues to be addressed are:

- Human Trade and Human Trafficking
- The Justice System and the Fight against Impunity
- Citizen Security and Women's Rights
- Integration of the Gender Perspectives in All Initiatives

I hope that this new meeting is the place to renovate the commitment to work for women's rights. At this time, we aim to insert a gender perspective into the construction of citizen security and to develop solid tools to protect women from human trade, human trafficking, and impunity.

This report is available so that the work done during the period of 2009-2011, in which I acted as President of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, can be verified.