



## DECLARATION

13th Gathering of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality  
**Bolstering Social Protection beyond COVID-19: What the Data Tells Us**  
September 13 and 22 and October 4, 2021 | Virtual sessions

We, parliamentarians from 21 countries<sup>1</sup> in the Americas and the Caribbean, met virtually on September 13 and 22 and October 4, 2021, with the support of the National Assembly of Belize and the Chamber of Senators of Bolivia, for the 13th Gathering of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality, entitled *Bolstering Social Protection beyond COVID-19: What the Data Tells Us*.

The Gathering provided a space for productive exchanges, including a dialogue with representatives of civil society organizations and youth organizations, on the importance of strengthening social protection systems and programs to redress the structural causes of gender inequality and other forms of social vulnerability exacerbated by the profound socio-economic and public health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the Gathering, participants recognized that the complex post-pandemic recovery processes should be viewed as an opportunity to strengthen democracy, social justice, restore citizens' trust in institutions, and renew the social contract under the imperative of effectively responding to the most pressing needs of specific population groups that have historically faced, and continue to face, exclusion and inequality.

The dialogues highlighted the need to enhance and modernize social protection systems and programs based on the collection and systematic use of information and data disaggregated by gender and other relevant intersecting variables. These inputs are necessary for meeting the differentiated needs of women and vulnerable groups during the pandemic and beyond.

Considering the above and,

### **Recognizing:**

1. That comprehensive social protection, as a national policy understood from a human rights perspective, involves a broad set of policies and programs that recognize that everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living that assures the health and general well-being of individuals and their families, as well as access to services and opportunities including but not limited to food, clothing, housing, education, free and universal health care, as well the necessary social protection in the event of maternity/parenthood, breastfeeding, unemployment, illness, work-related hazards and accidents, disability, widowhood, old age, or other instances in which they may lose their livelihoods due to circumstances beyond their control.

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<sup>1</sup> The countries convened were: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago

2. That, throughout their life cycles, individuals will require a series of different social protection policies and programs based, among other factors, on their age, gender, sex, disability status, work and family situation, and other intersectional considerations.
3. That the right to social protection is enshrined in different international instruments, such as the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#), the [American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man](#), the [Declaration of Philadelphia](#), the [Social Security Convention](#), and the [Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development](#), among others.
4. That the Sustainable Development Goals, as a global road map for eradicating poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring prosperity for all, provide guidelines for establishing and strengthening social protection systems, especially through Targets 1.3, 3.8, and 8.b.
5. That, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO),<sup>2</sup> 71 percent of the world population lacks access to a comprehensive social protection system or only has partial access. The same organization estimates<sup>3</sup> that in Latin America and the Caribbean 40 percent of workers and their families are not protected by any kind of social protection.
6. That social protection systems that are well-designed, based on principles of universality and solidarity, user-centred, easily accessible, and supported by evidence and disaggregated data not only contribute to reducing poverty and inequality, but also promote human dignity, strengthen gender equality, social cohesion and political stability, and bolster economic growth, sustainable development, and resilience to disasters and the effects of climate change.
7. That, due to their very nature, proper governance of social protection systems requires the broadest possible multi-sector collaboration and coordination, as well as the necessary communication and dissemination strategies required to ensure that the public is aware not only of the programmes and rights available to them, but also of the ways in which they can access them.
8. That despite the undeniable advances in social protection experienced in the Americas and the Caribbean in recent decades, structural deficiencies persist in the policies and programs designed for this purpose, both in terms of coverage and effective access, as well as quality, adequacy, and sustainability.
9. That the high levels of informality and inequality in the hemisphere call for more robust social protection systems to adequately respond to the needs of specific population groups that have historically faced, and continue to face, difficulties in accessing social protection, such as migrants and informal, rural, domestic, and seasonal workers, among others.
10. That women tend to assume a disproportionate amount of paid and unpaid care work, which in many cases prevents them from fully exercising their rights, restricts the development of their life projects,

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<sup>2</sup> [World Social Protection Report 2017-2019](#). International Labour Organization.

<sup>3</sup> [Social Protection in Latin America and the Caribbean](#). International Labour Organization.

and puts them in precarious work situations, affecting their ability to access social protection and benefits such as pensions.

11. That the serious socio-economic and public health consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to highlighting the shortcomings of existing social protection systems, have created a series of additional social welfare challenges that must be adequately addressed by temporary and specifically-designed social protection policies and programs that meet the most urgent needs of the population groups that have been most affected by the pandemic.
12. That the COVID-19 pandemic has had serious impacts on the education, mental health, and well-being of children and youth, as well as the job prospects of youth, and particularly of young women and young people living in lower-income countries.<sup>4</sup>
13. That it is imperative to have high-quality statistical analyses of disaggregated data and qualitative first-hand information available to identify patterns, nuances, gaps, and trends to inform the creation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of social protection systems and programs, ensuring that they are inclusive and effective.

**We commit to:**

1. Defend the principles of universality and of solidarity of social protection grounded in human dignity and social inclusion, with special attention to the population groups that have historically faced difficulties in accessing social protection, recognizing the centrality of non-discrimination, gender equality, and the importance of meeting the specific needs of the most vulnerable people.
2. Review existing social protection floors in accordance with the guidelines established in the [Social Protection Floors Recommendation 202](#) of the ILO, in order to ensure that, at minimum, all people who need it can access essential health care and basic income security throughout their life cycle.
3. Advance the legal frameworks needed to guarantee broad and inclusive access to social protection without discrimination, and to ensure that the systems, programs, and services provided are developed with a gender-responsive budgeting approach and meet the highest international standards.
4. Continue the necessary expansion of existing social protection programs for children, facilitating access to nutrition, education, and health services for girls, boys, and adolescents, recognizing these as human rights; and incorporating childcare services and the provision of universal parental leave, in order to prevent and reduce child poverty and eradicate child labour.
5. Promote the incorporation of inclusive, gender-responsive food security programs in national social protection systems that contribute to sustainable economic growth and reduce the risk of food insecurity in the future by allocating adequate financial resources to food production and using

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<sup>4</sup> [Youth & COVID-19: Impacts on Jobs, Education, Rights and Mental Well-being](#). Executive Summary. ILO et al.

instruments such as subsidies on supplies, public works projects that create agricultural assets, and school feeding programs with local products, among others.

6. Insist on the need to facilitate access to social protection systems and programs, making use of new technologies whenever possible, and addressing the risks of exclusion associated with characteristics such as gender, disability, ethnicity, and employment status.
7. Defend and guarantee the annual increase of public spending on social protection programs, including in the context of austerity measures and fiscal contraction caused by the economic effects of crises, such as that stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.
8. Urge our governments to ensure that a gender-responsive and intersectional approach is applied in the design of social protection programs put in place in response to the socio-economic and public health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, prioritizing severely affected groups, such as older adults, young women, women who are informal workers, pregnant women, mothers who are heads of households, children and adolescents, and people with disabilities.
9. Advocate for increased public spending on social protection programs and benefits that recognize the principle of co-responsibility in care work and cover both those in need of care and those who are required or choose to provide care to others.
10. Strengthen parliamentary oversight of the management and administration of social protection systems and programs, ensuring adherence to the principles of universality, solidarity, and progressive realization, the protection of the rights of the most vulnerable population groups, the broadest possible coverage and comprehensiveness, and the fiscal sustainability and progressiveness of the system.
11. Require competent authorities to collect disaggregated data, as well as quantitative and qualitative first-hand testimonials and information, particularly from women, Indigenous, Afrodescendent, and Indo-descendant peoples, and other groups that are traditionally underrepresented in decision-making processes, for use in the creation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of social protection systems and programs.
12. Maintain constant dialogue on social protection with the relevant institutions and civil society to inform our legislative actions with regard to these issues and ensure that existing programs and benefits are widely known, understood and accessible by the beneficiary population.
13. Promote the creation of remunerated and dignified jobs, especially for populations most affected by job loss due to the pandemic, such as older adults, youth, and pregnant people.

Adopted on October 4, 2021