

Foro Interparlamentario de las Américas
Fórum Interparlamentar das Américas



Forum interparlementaire des Amériques
Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas

Report of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas

Panama City, February 2003

Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Discussion	3
3.	Closing	4
4.	Annexes	5
8.1	Annex 1 - List of Participating Delegates and Countries	5
8.2	Annex 2 – Agenda for the 1 st Meeting of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas	6
8.3	Annex 3 - Resolution for the Creation of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas	6

1. Introduction

Within the framework of the 2nd Plenary Meeting of FIPA, the women parliamentarians in attendance held a working meeting chaired by Argentine Congresswoman Margarita Stolbizer for the purpose of discussing the motion brought by the Argentine delegation for the creation of the “Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas”. 18 women parliamentarians from 6 countries in the Americas participated in this important event. (See *Annex 1*)

On behalf of the host country, Panamanian legislator Gloria Young welcomed the group and introduced the chair for the meeting. Congresswoman Stolbizer called the meeting to order and presented the working agenda. (See *Annex 2*)

2. Discussion

The proposed motion for the creation of the Group is based on Chapter III (Organization and Functioning), number 2, clause a) of the FIPA Regulations, which specifically states that “delegations [...] should have female participation”.

Congresswoman Stolbizer emphasized that FIPA’s main challenges are strengthening democracies in the region and distributing the benefits of globalization. There are also efforts to create lines of action that promote greater equilibrium between peoples and help eliminate the polarization within each country as well as between strong and weak countries.

Also analyzed was the status of women in the workplace and the serious employment discrimination to which they are subject, specifically with respect to their entry into the work force, as they are vulnerable from the start due to pay inequity. Furthermore, women sometimes fall short in the area of retirement contributions as compared to men, as a direct result of the differentiated impact and adjustment policies of globalization on the various vulnerable groups, in particular women.

In addition, a high percentage of women in the Americas are household heads and are thus relegated to the informal economy, without the protection of legal remedies. As a result, their work tends to be invisible in the national economy and, on many occasions, women take on responsibilities proper to the State.

Congresswoman Stolbizer stressed that these are among the reasons justifying the inclusion of the subject of women and the gender perspective in the main discussions of FIPA. On the other hand, the discussion on strengthening of democracies must proceed in parallel to the promotion of women’s political leadership. She concluded with the statement “freer women will mean freer nations”.

Mexican legislator Silvia Álvarez opened the discussion by the women parliamentarians in attendance by stating her agreement with the motion and recommending that it be more actively presented to the Plenary.

FIPA Chair Céline Hervieux-Payette pointed out that historical and economic factors are obstacles to ongoing participation by women in these forums, since there are small countries that lack economic resources and do not have sufficient political representation by women in their

parliaments. Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, representing the UPD, recommended strengthening the participation of women in the political arena.

Legislator Rebeca Saona of Panama declared her approval of the proposal put forth, and referred to the outstanding participation by Panamanian women in the cultural, political, social and educational fields. She also agreed with the remarks made by the FIPA Chair with respect to the need to increase the percentage of political participation by women in the Parliament.

Congresswoman Kyra De La Rosa from the Costa Rican delegation took the opportunity to report on the status of women in her country, pointing out that female representation in Parliament is 40%, and at the municipal level, 60%.

Eleni Bakopanos, Canadian Member of Parliament, pointed out the need to analyze the proposed document and determine how the Women's Group would operate, as well as the type of relations it would maintain with the Executive Committee. The meeting's chair clarified that the purpose of this meeting was only to discuss approval of the establishment of the Women's Group, its objectives and lines of action.

Panamanian legislator Haydee Milanés de Lay expressed the need to draft proposals to improve the economic status of women and to work in the region at eliminating barriers to political participation by women, many of which are caused by women themselves.

Nancy Patricia Gutiérrez, Colombian Congresswoman, recommended adding "Creation of mechanisms that promote women's participation in politics" to the general objectives in the original document. Her recommendation was approved.

Mexican Senator Silvia Hernández proposed that the Women's Group be composed of two representatives from each participating subregion, which represents a change to the original motion.

Lastly, FIPA Chair Céline Hervieux-Payette intervened to say that matters respecting the internal functioning of this Women's Group and its relations with the rest of the organization must be discussed after the creation of the group is approved by the Plenary. Each subregion would then assign its representatives.

3. Closing

After lengthy discussion and incorporation of the approved modifications, the participating women parliamentarians agreed to submit the document to the Plenary Meeting for discussion and approval. (See Annex 3)

4. Annexes

8.1 Annex 1 - List of Participating Delegates and Countries

Delegates	Countries
Gloria Young	Panama
Margarita Stolbizer	Argentina
Céline Hervieux-Payette	Canada
Silvia Alvarez B.	Mexico
Celita Alamilla P.	Mexico
Maria Elena Alvarez	Mexico
Rebeca Saona	Panama
Silvia Hernández	Mexico
Kyra de la Rosa	Costa Rica
Ligia Zúñiga	Costa Rica
Rocio Ulloz Solano	Costa Rica
Maria Lourdes Ocampo	Costa Rica
Nancy Patricia Gutierrez	Colombia
Adriana Gutierrez	Colombia
Eleni Bakopanos	Canada
Haydee Milanés de Lay	Panama
Teresita de Arias	Panama
Olgalina de Quijada	Panama
Elizabeth Spehar	OAS - UPD

8.2 Annex 2 – Agenda for the 1st Meeting of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas

1. Welcoming remarks.
2. Presentation of the proposed motion for the creation of the “Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas”.
3. Establishment of the Group.
4. Definition of the group’s objectives.
5. Identification of lines of action.
6. Approval of the report and recommendations to be submitted at the Plenary Meeting.

8.3 Annex 3 - Resolution for the Creation of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas

Original: Spanish

Proposal for the Creation of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas (Unanimously approved at the 2nd Plenary Meeting)

Considering the proposal put forth by the Argentine delegation for the creation of a Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas under the framework of FIPA;

Taking into account the results of the preparatory meeting of the FIPA women parliamentarians group chaired by Argentine Congresswoman Margarita Stolbizer and held in Panama City on the 21st of February 2003, under the framework of the 2nd Plenary Meeting of FIPA;

The members of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA), gathered in Panama City at its 2nd Plenary Meeting, resolve:

To *approve* the creation of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, which is to operate as a permanent action group under the framework of FIPA.

To *agree* that this working group will be made up of two representatives from each of the subregions of the Americas (North, Central, South and Caribbean) and that it will have as its general objectives:

1. To strengthen the leadership of female politicians through ongoing regional exchange actions.

2. To promote the creation of conditions for equal opportunities, prioritizing the fight against poverty and the elimination of employment discrimination.
3. To strengthen democracies in the countries of the Americas in an effort to achieve respect for human rights and conditions that promote equitable and sustainable social development.
4. To promote the creation of mechanisms that encourage the participation of women in politics.
5. To strengthen the active participation by women at FIPA working meetings, incorporating the gender perspective into each of the topics analyzed by the organization.

To *support* the initial action plan proposed at the preparatory meeting, which seeks to:

1. Promote regional debate and exchanges of experience and legislative frameworks through ongoing interaction and the holding of regional and/or subregional meetings aimed at fulfilling the proposed objectives.
2. Raise awareness among women in the region by analyzing the challenges and opportunities of hemispheric integration, the main topics of the 2nd Plenary Meeting of FIPA held in Panama City.
3. Analyze the negative impact on women of the economic and financial crises in the region, and propose cooperation policies to address and resolve those crises.
4. Produce a participative assessment that helps illustrate the status of women in the region.

Foro Interparlamentario de las Américas
Fórum Interparlamentar das Américas



Forum interparlementaire des Amériques
Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas

361-E Centre Block
The Senate of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A4
Canada

Tel: (613) 947-8008
Fax: (613) 947-8010
e-mail: barnema@sen.parl.gc.ca

www.e-FIPA.org

© 2003