

Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas



Final Report Second Regional Forum

(Central America and South America)
Buenos Aires, Argentina, April 6-8, 2005

Foro Interparlamentario de las Américas
Fórum Interparlamentar das Américas



Forum interparlementaire des Amériques
Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas

Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas

Second Regional Forum (Central America and South America)

Enhancing Women's Leadership to Strengthen Democracy

Buenos Aires, Argentina, April 6-8, 2005

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Lastly, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to all the parliamentarians, experts and representatives of civil society organizations who, by sharing their experience and expertise, assisted in achieving the Forum's objectives.

Nota Bene

This report, prepared by the FIPA Secretariat, contains summaries of the speeches and discussions held on April 7 and 8, 2005. The full text of the speeches and some PowerPoint presentations are available in Spanish on FIPA's Virtual Parliament site at www.e-fipa.org.

Original: French

Introduction

In accordance with a decision by FIPA's Executive Committee, the Second Regional Forum of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas was held at the National Congress building in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on April 6, 7 and 8, 2005. An initiative of Argentine Congresswoman Margarita Stolbizer, Chair of the Group of Women Parliamentarians, the event was attended by 46 parliamentarians from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Uruguay and Venezuela.

The conference's objectives were as follows:

- Improve the ability of parliamentarians to implement gender-equality policies through the exchange of experiences and best practices.
- Assess progress in the area of women's leadership in the region while identifying tools to enhance their participation in decision-making venues.
- Make recommendations to FIPA's Plenary Assembly, with a view to the Fourth Summit of the Americas (Mar del Plata, Argentina, November 4 and 5, 2005), which will focus on the theme of "creating employment to confront poverty and strengthen democratic governance".

A reception was held on April 6, 2005, to welcome the participants. The official proceedings took place on April 7 and 8, 2005.

1. Opening Ceremony

« We representatives of South and Central America meet here today, burdened by debts, mistakes and neglect. We are now engaged in another struggle, another battle, which in terms of thought and action means serving and looking out for those who have been left behind and need us».

- Senator Miriam Curletti, Vice-President of the Argentinean Senate



Congresswoman Margarita Stolbizer, Chair of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, opened the conference by thanking the World Bank Institute, the Finnish Government and FIPA's other partners for their support. After providing a brief overview of the history of FIPA's Group of Women Parliamentarians, Ms. Stolbizer outlined the program for the two days of discussion.



The next speaker, Ms. Silvia Hernández, a Mexican Senator and member of FIPA's Executive Committee, conveyed greetings from the Honourable Céline Hervieux-Payette, President of FIPA. She also took the opportunity to stress how important it was for women parliamentarians to participate in all types of parliamentary work – not just social but also economic, budgetary and technical – so that they could put forward concrete solutions to problems of concern to them.

Ms. Hernández was followed by Argentine Congressman Luis Arturo Molinari Romero, also a member of FIPA's Executive Committee, who welcomed the participants and pointed out that it was vital to take women's perspectives into account in any democratic debate and decision-making process. Mr. Molinari invited the participants to attend FIPA's Fourth Plenary Assembly in Brasilia and to make their views known, through FIPA, to the heads of state of the Americas, who will be meeting in Mar del Plata in November 2005.

The ceremony ended with an address by the Honourable Miriam Curletti, vice-president of the Argentine Senate, who emphasized the importance of networks such as FIPA's Group of Women's Parliamentarians in incorporating a woman's viewpoint and asserting the rights of the most seriously marginalized peoples in debates on regional integration, as women do in their respective parliaments.

The speeches are reproduced in full in the appendixes.

2. Session 1: Women's Leadership and Power

The first work session, led by Argentine Congresswoman Rosario Romero, dealt with the question of women's political leadership, especially the representation of women in parliaments and the recognition and removal of existing barriers. Following a description of the situation by Paraguayan expert Line Bareiro, Congresswoman Graciela Camaño from Argentina, Senator Silvia Hernández from Mexico and Senator Ana Mendoza de Acha from Paraguay shared their countries' experiences regarding women's participation in politics. The parliamentarians then discussed the issue with a view to developing some recommendations.

2.1 Speech: Overcoming Adversity: Building Women's Leadership

The speech by Ms. Bareiro, director of the *Centro de Documentación y Estudios* in Asunción, Paraguay, was about removing obstacles to women's access to political power.

While there are a number of examples of great women leaders in Latin American history, only in the last 15 years have women's individual leadership abilities resulted in increased representation in political forums.

Despite the legitimacy acquired by demands for gender equality, women are in fact still largely excluded from the decision-making process, which raises questions about the true meaning of democratic governance. According to Ms. Bareiro, two rules of the democratic game absolutely must be followed if we are to achieve gender equality: pluralism (representation of the diversity of interests in a society) and the rule of law (compliance with democratically instituted rules, both domestic and international). Equality of the sexes is entrenched to varying degrees in the laws of all countries in the

region. For example, Argentina's Constitution mentions removing obstacles to equality, however, not every country reflects the principles of equality in their laws. One country that recently added gender equality provisions to its electoral legislation is Honduras; however, the political "market" is like any other market and does not in itself generate equality. It is therefore the State's responsibility to take action to promote equality conditions.

Ms. Bareiro further noted that Latin America had still not completed the sharp turn that the acquisition of civil and political rights represented for women, in the sense that while many women are exercising the right to elect others, few are exercising their right to be elected. Even though Latin America has a slightly higher percentage of women in lower houses (16.4%) than the world average (15.5%), the imbalance in candidacies is clearly the primary obstacle to the election of more women to parliaments. Among the other barriers to women's advancement in politics are the stereotype-laden political culture and institutional obstacles such as the lack of financial transparency in political parties and the difficulty of obtaining education funding.

Ms. Bareiro concluded by suggesting some ways to remove these obstacles. She encouraged the parliamentarians present to not only support the development of public policies favouring gender equality but also to work toward building women's leaderships that respond to the interests of society by being effective, ethical and people-oriented.

2.2 National Experiences: Argentina, Mexico and Paraguay

2.2.1 Argentina



Congresswoman Graciela Camaño began by noting that women's struggle was not just for women's rights but rather for social justice, as the situation of women – particularly those who are heads of families – is becoming more unstable.

Yet at the institutional level, only a third of municipalities have departments responsible for women's rights, and five of the 24 provinces in Argentina have no

women's rights organization. Women are seriously underrepresented at the executive level, as there is only one woman cabinet minister in the current federal government and no women governors of provinces. What's more, there is almost no affirmative action to remedy this problem. Women are also very poorly represented in the upper reaches of the judiciary.

With regard to legislative power, quota law 24.012, passed during the 1994 constitutional reform, requires that at least 30% of the candidates on political parties' lists be women. This increased the percentage of women in the Senate to 43% following



the last election, but in the Chamber of Deputies, what was set as the minimum level 10 years ago seems to have become today's maximum.

We have also found that women's participation in parliament does not mean they actually have some power. First, women's accession to political power has coincided with a decrease in the power of parliaments. Second, power is concentrated at the senior levels of political parties and caucuses, levels to which very few women have access. Party charters have not been harmonized with respect to Article 37 and the temporary provision in the Constitution that requires them to fill 30% of executive-level positions with women. It is also regrettable that the Congress has not passed legislation to enforce that article.

Progress has been made in other social spheres: for example, the union quotas law has contributed to women's progress in the leadership of unions, but there is still a great deal of work to be done in the professional, academic and scientific fields and in the private sector.

In conclusion, Congresswoman Camaño pointed out the vital role that women play in the fight against dictatorship and encouraged her colleagues to build a meaningful leadership: "Today we may still be concerned about leading, but let us also be concerned about knowing why. Therefore, the challenge is twofold: we must keep up with the times and prepare ourselves to face them."

2.2.2 Mexico

The second presentation was made by Senator Silvia Hernández on the Mexican Congress' experience with quotas.

The political movement of women blossomed in Mexico in the 1970s, but women's powerful arguments at the time did not actually begin to bear fruit until the 1990s, when for the first time women were not confined to ministries for the status of women. Just a few years ago, it resulted in the introduction of legislative mechanisms favouring women. After some half-hearted attempts, the federal electoral code now states that no more than 70% of a party's candidates can be of the same sex.

While taking a clear stance in favour of quotas, Senator Hernández noted the arguments that inform the debate surrounding the enforcement of a quota law. On one hand, quotas have the advantage of being effective, fostering the development of a women's agenda, and teaching women about the operation of parliament, the decision-making process, consensus building, negotiation, and political commitment. Opponents argue that quotas discriminate against men, encourage the recruitment of uneducated women to meet the quota, and stigmatize women.

According to Senator Hernández, quotas cannot be effective unless they are accompanied by complementary measures: a position system (in Mexico's case, lists are composed of sets of three: two men, one woman, two men, one woman, and so on) and regulations favouring access for women in small electoral districts (for example, if only two candidates on the list are elected, one of them must be a woman). In this exercise, women must be uncompromising and effective within their respective parties.

Senator Hernández concluded by noting that FIPA was a forum for sharing information, exchanging views and especially taking action by learning, through the experiences of

other women parliamentarians: “If we realize that FIPA must include in the Virtual Parliament [www.e-fipa.org] a list of each woman parliamentarian’s achievements and how each Parliament works, at least we will have the satisfaction of coming here to learn how to ask for more.”

2.2.3 Paraguay

Senator Ana Mendoza de Acha related her experience as a woman parliamentarian in Paraguay, where only five of the Senate’s 45 members and only eight of the 80 members of the Chamber of Deputies are women.

Women in Paraguay are marginalized and excluded from positions of power: only three women chair committees, and no woman has ever been elected president of either house. Prejudice against women parliamentarians persists, and they are still confined to social issues, which are considered “women’s issues”, while the chair positions of technical committees, which is where the real power is, are reserved for men.

According to Senator Mendoza de Acha, women also have to show what they can do with more determination than men, and they have little margin for error. In addition, they are often urged to adopt an aggressive male political style.

On the basis of her personal experience as chair of the human rights committee, Senator Mendoza de Acha stated that it was possible as a woman to develop one’s own style while still being firm. She presented several examples of results-based leadership, both in her work with the elderly and in her efforts for prisoners’ rights. She also pointed out the opportunity she had had as a parliamentarian to contribute to consensus-building and problem-solving between opposing groups by offering them a discussion forum in Parliament itself.

She then stated that her role was also to include in the political agenda issues that were all too often ignored, in order to represent all citizens, even the most marginalized ones.

After emphasizing two elements that are essential to good political representation – seeking concrete results, and transmitting values such as honesty and transparency – the Senator ended her address by encouraging her colleagues to speak about their experience and to serve as examples, especially for young people.

2.3 Discussion

Senator Shhressarenko of Brazil, Congresswoman Quesada of Honduras, Assemblywoman Santos Amaral of Venezuela, Assemblywomen Peña Pinto and Coto of El Salvador, Senator Calderón of Mexico and Andean Parliamentarian Vallejo Klaere spoke during the discussion, which was moderated by Argentine Congresswoman Rosario Romero.

The following topics in particular were addressed:

- The reform of electoral laws and political parties, and especially the things needed to make quota laws effective;
- The importance of carrying on the gender equality debate and the resulting initiatives in the media;



- The importance of acquiring practical techniques for exercising power, such as negotiating tactics;
- Coordination between political parties and the development of common agendas for dealing with gender-equality and children's rights issues;
- The key role of political parties as the main vehicles of the political advancement of women;
- The formation of networks and alliances (e.g., the forum of women members of political parties and the association of women parliamentarians and ex-parliamentarians in El Salvador);
- The transmission of gender-equality values to the younger generation through initiatives such as the children's parliament, with a view to removing cultural obstacles inherent in patriarchal traditions;
- The need for organizations such as FIPA to support parliamentarians in their battle for the establishment of quotas and to take action on decisions made at inter-parliamentary conferences;
- The need to prioritize the removal of obstacles to women's political advancement so that appropriate solutions can be brought to bear;
- The responsibility of women for transmitting gender-equality values, since the power structures that exist in the family are transferred to the political arena;
- The need to have men take part in gender equality discussions;
- The need to transfer feminine characteristics to the political realm, by promoting leadership based on discussion, consensus, transparency and ethical conduct.

2.4 Conclusions

On the situation of women in the Region:

- **There have always been women leaders, but we are lacking the union of this leadership with the possibility and desire to hold power.**
- **The discourse on equality has acquired broad legitimacy but no one wants to discuss it in public forums.**
- **Discrimination continues to be permanent, despite great progress towards the acquisition of rights.**
- **Where fundamentalism is present, women lose rights.**
- **There is job discrimination in the form of a wage gap for equal work and the greatest difference is in the technical and professional fields.**
- **The division of powers, the rule of law, the incorporation of international treaties on women's rights into domestic law, and pluralism, understood as respect for diversity and identity, are a framework that favours equality.**
- **Women in the spheres of power still tend to be restricted to areas considered to be 'feminine' and excluded from other relevant areas in managing public issues.**



3. Session 2: Women, Poverty and Employment

The second work session focused on the role of parliaments in reducing poverty and creating jobs for women. One objective of the discussions was to develop recommendations for submission to the heads of state and government of the Americas who will attend the Mar del Plata summit in November 2005, where the theme will be “Creating employment to confront poverty and strengthen democratic governance”.

Following a presentation by Mercedes Kremenetzky, an expert from the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), an agency of the Organization of American States established in 1928 to advance women’s rights, parliamentarians Elsa Aguirre Guevara of Bolivia, Iara Bernardi of Brazil and Blanca Flor Bonilla of El Salvador spoke about the experiences of their respective institutions in this area.

3.1 Speech: Incorporating the gender issue into poverty-reduction policies and programs

After noting that poverty was not so much a condition in which basic needs were not being met as the inability or lack of opportunity to change the situation, Mercedes Kremenetzky listed the main factors in the feminization of poverty in the Americas: the growing number of women heads of families who have insecure employment, the lack of access to factors of production such as land, capital, information, new technologies and natural resources, and the concentration of women’s jobs in the informal economy and low-paying industries. Despite this negative picture, it is clear that the incomes of women – even poor women – generate important social benefits, such as health and education, since women devote more family resources to them. Thus, women’s access to productive employment is a key strategy for obtaining genuine results.

To develop effective policies and programs to combat poverty among women, it is vital to analyze the different impact of poverty on men and women. To that end, the CIM introduced the Inter-American Program on the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality (IAP), whose goal is to systematically integrate a gender-equality perspective in regional policies and programs, for example, by taking part in preparations for ministerial meetings in various sectors.

One of the CIM's major recommendations for parliamentarians who sit on budget committees is to allocate greater technical and financial resources to the integration of a gender-equality perspective in public policy. The other recommendations are as follows: produce gender-based statistics; adopt growth policies that favour labour-intensive activities; analyze the differential impact of public policies on men and women; provide incentives to encourage private business to improve women's access to saving and loans; facilitate equal access for women to production resources and employment and introduce pay equity policies; improve poor women's access to reproductive health and family planning services; recognize the value of unpaid work; and adopt policies that promote equitable division of domestic and family obligations and provide children with equitable access to the education system.

In conclusion, Ms. Kremenetzky reiterated the CIM's willingness to partner with FIPA's Group of Women Parliamentarians to support gender-equality and poverty-reduction policies. The documents distributed by the CIM are available to parliamentarians on the Virtual Parliament site at www.e-fipa.org.

3.2 National Experiences: Bolivia, Brazil and El Salvador

3.2.1 Bolivia



After briefly recounting her personal experience as the first woman elected to a union leadership position in Bolivia, Congresswoman Elsa Guevara Aguirre described the situation of women in Bolivia, a resource-rich, highly diverse country where a large portion of the population still lives below the poverty line.

While Bolivian women have had the right to vote and stand for election since the 1952 revolution, Bolivia has a higher illiteracy rate than the rest of Latin America, a high incidence of physical and psychological family violence and, in particular, a high level of poverty among women due to the lack of central, departmental and municipal government policies. Nevertheless, the gap between men and women narrowed between 1976 and 2001, and progress has been made in national policies for the advancement of women.

In the executive branch, there is now a subministry for women; a quarter of the country's cabinet ministers are women (in the labour, education, health and popular participation portfolios); and the post of presidential delegate to combat corruption is

also held by a woman. In the legislative branch, 52 of the 130 deputies and 10 of the 27 senators in Congress are women (24 deputies and four senators are incumbents). There are also two women on the Supreme Court, which overall is a great step forward for the Bolivian nation.

Congresswoman Aguirre went on to talk about her country's legislative experience in protecting women and children, providing a brief synopsis of the following laws: law 1.551 on popular participation; the law on the national institute for agrarian reform (INRA), which gave women the right to own land; the municipalities law, which regulates municipal services for family and women's protection; the law on the people's advocate, a family protection institution; and the political parties law, which requires that 30% of the party members be women and that men's and women's names alternate on the lists. The political parties law was a major factor in increasing the number of incumbent women deputies in Congress.

Ms. Aguirre also referred to the family code; the law on abbreviation of civil trials and on family assistance (with its pros and cons); the law against family violence; the law on women domestic workers, which sets a minimum wage and mandatory employment benefits; and the law on universal mother and child health insurance. In addition, she noted that Congress was working on draft legislation for a constituent assembly, which provides for equal representation of men and women.

Congresswoman Aguirre ended her presentation by calling for such conferences to include more men so that men and women can work together for egalitarian social inclusion.

3.2.2 Brazil

The presentation by Brazilian Congresswoman Iara Bernardi, who sits on the executive committee of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA), focused on the legislative initiatives of the Brazilian Congress's women's caucus to combat poverty among women and advance women's rights.

The situation in Brazil, she noted, is largely consistent with the overall regional picture painted by the CIM: despite the country's wealth and diversity, profound social inequality affects women most, and the lack of social policies has helped maintain this state of affairs for many years. The situation, reflected in wage discrimination, the insecurity of jobs held by women, and the absence of a social safety net, has been documented by a committee on the feminization of poverty.

Since there is no gender equality committee in Congress, the women's caucus decided to take on the responsibility of fighting to improve the socio-economic situation of women. According to Congresswoman Bernardi, one of the results of this alliance was the enactment of clearer legislation on domestic work and the introduction of a bill, currently being debated, to provide a pension for women who do not work outside the home. The caucus would also like to introduce legislation concerning pension rights for women domestic employees, which would protect child care workers in particular. The situation of women in rural areas, women's access to credit, and the protection of informal jobs (mostly held by women) are also being debated, as is the work of midwives, on which draft legislation is currently before Congress.



The Congresswoman expressed particular interest in the experience that her colleagues in the Americas had had with budgets integrating a gender-equality perspective in public policy (not yet tried in Brazil) and on the sensitive issue of the decriminalization of abortion, currently being studied by a tripartite committee of Congress, government and civil society.

She also explained that the Brazilian Congress had established a special committee to combat sexual exploitation of children, sex tourism and trafficking in women and children, which are becoming more prevalent in Brazil. She also mentioned the changes made in the penal code to eliminate discrimination against women, especially the provisions that protected “honest women” (which defined adultery as a crime) and remedied rape and sexual offences through marriage with the perpetrator.

Finally, Ms. Bernardi stressed that much work remained to be done in the area of electoral legislation, noting that the deficiencies of the current quota system were evident in the fact that the percentage of women in Brazil’s Congress was among the lowest on the continent (45 of 513 deputies and nine of 81 senators).

3.2.3 *El Salvador*

Salvadoran Assemblywoman Blanca Flor Bonilla rounded out the series of presentations with selected information about the situation of women in El Salvador and aspects of anti-poverty activities in her country.

Shortly after the peace accords in 1994, a women’s rights program was instituted in El Salvador, leading to a series of legislative reforms as part of the country’s international commitments. However, the commitments are far from being met, since the available data, which are incomplete because of the lack of gender-based statistics, show an increase in extreme poverty among women. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has drawn the Salvadoran government’s attention to the plight of women in rural areas. In addition, the employment data presented by the Assemblywoman show that in almost every age group, the situation of women is more insecure.

Despite the government’s existing education, health and job creation programs, the most effective survival strategy is still the huge amount of money sent home by Salvadoran expatriates in the United States. These remittances account for 16% of the gross domestic product, however, the costs of Salvadoran emigration are high: it tears families apart, which in turn leads to many problems, such as increased violence.

Acknowledging that there was no consensus among the political parties on causes of and solutions to the feminization of poverty, Assemblywoman Bonilla argued that employment, a stable income, education and health care are critical human rights for a participatory democracy and not just “opportunities”, as they are referred to in neo-liberal ideology.

With regard to legislation, Ms. Bonilla criticized certain legislative decisions that had worsened the situation of women, such as raising the retirement age and privatizing the pension system.

She noted that despite ideological differences among the parties, the alliance of women parliamentarians in the Legislative Assembly had produced initiatives aimed at finding

concrete solutions. One of the best examples was the draft budget incorporating a gender-equality perspective, which includes a proposal to earmark a specific budget for selected women's health problems, such as breast cancer and cervical cancer.

3.3 Discussion

The discussion, moderated by Argentine Congresswoman Alicia Tate, continued with contributions by Congresswomen Donis and Montenegro of Guatemala, Senator Guzmán of Mexico, Assemblywoman Alemañy of Cuba, and Senator Franco de Fernández of Paraguay.

The parliamentarians made the following points:

- The budget is the main instrument through which legislators can exercise their influence and promote the implementation of public policies and programs that benefit women. For example, the Mexican Congress approved the allocation of budgetary resources to study the socio-economic situation of men and women in each state. However, budgetary resources may be constrained by limited tax revenue.
- Interparliamentary organizations such as FIPA should organize workshops on how to develop budgets that incorporate a gender-equality perspective.
- Parliamentarians can also exercise their influence on the socio-economic situation of women by working to enact legislation on the family, maternity, access to education, discrimination in employment, micro-business and small and medium-sized business sectors, access to free treatment for women's diseases such as breast cancer, child care centres in the workplace, health care access for mothers and children, and so on.

3.4 Conclusions

- 1. To reduce poverty, we must solve the problem of inequality, particularly with respect to access to land, housing, information, and technology, and to the means of production.**
- 2. The main avenue is training, education, and public policies to reduce social inequalities.**
- 3. There is a feminization of poverty that is linked to the difficulties faced by women in gaining access to the same means as men, particularly as a result of their unequal treatment in the workforce, where discrimination and lack of protection with respect to wages and social benefits can clearly be seen.**
- 4. Poverty affects women more, and therefore its elimination is linked to the elimination of gender discrimination. Therefore the impact of general policies on women should be evaluated and specific policies and programs should be implemented, plus gender perspective should be incorporated as a cross-cutting issue in public policies.**
- 5. More technical and financial resources are needed for women's promotion.**
- 6. Promote concrete means for more equitable distribution of family responsibilities between men and women; equitable access for both sexes to the education system; and the eradication of domestic violence and protection of jobs in the informal sector.**

Rapporteurs: Congresswomen Alicia Tate & Margarita Stolbizer

4. Session 3: *Women's Human Rights and Violence against Women*

The final session on Thursday, April 7, was devoted to the issue of women's human rights and violence. It opened with an address by Ms. Susana Chiarotti, regional coordinator of the Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defence of Women's Rights (CLADEM), followed by presentations on the experiences of the Chilean and Dominican parliaments by Congresswomen Maria Antonieta Saa and Cristina Lizardo. The session ended with a discussion moderated by Argentine Congresswoman Elda Susana Agüero.

4.1 *Speech: International instruments to protect women's rights, and the role of parliaments*

Ms. Susana Chiarotti began by restating two major responsibilities that parliaments have with regard to human rights: first, to ratify international treaties concluded by States and harmonize domestic laws with the treaty commitments, and second, to pass laws so that citizens can enjoy the rights guaranteed under international treaties. From an ethical standpoint, parliaments' responsibilities are not confined to binding treaties that require legislation; they also include the systematic implementation of international action plans and programs adopted by governments, such as the Beijing Action Plan.



In the area of international law, the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) represents a major victory for the protection of women's rights, first because the Convention focuses on non-discrimination, a principle that can be applied immediately, and second because civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights are part of a single set of indivisible, interdependent rights. Article 2 of the Convention is aimed specifically at the legislative branch, urging

States to “embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle” and to “adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women”.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention, adopted in 1999, strengthened the Convention by establishing a mechanism for reporting violations of women's rights or requesting an inquiry. The Protocol has not yet been ratified by Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Cuba or El Salvador.

The Committee reviews the periodic reports submitted by each country and makes concluding observations, which can guide parliaments by indicating needed changes in legislation. Ms. Chiarotti also invited parliamentarians to examine the Committee's general recommendations, especially recommendation 24, which calls on States to

reform all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women. She took the opportunity to cite a few flagrant violations of women's rights that remain in the laws of some countries in the Americas, such as the provision, recently repealed in Brazil but still present to varying degrees in the laws of Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Panama and Uruguay, which allows a rapist to make reparation for his crime by marrying the victim.

The CLADEM coordinator further suggested that participants read the Cardoso report on United Nations reform, which mentions proposals on how the relationship between parliaments and the United Nations should be structured.

Finally, Ms. Chiarotti provided a brief description of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women "Convention of Belém do Pará", which is unique in that it establishes a new right: the right to be free from violence. A mechanism was recently established to provide better monitoring of the Convention; it consists of a conference of States Parties and a committee to review the reports of States Parties and submit recommendations to the conference, which will increase parliamentarians' responsibilities.

She ended her address by reiterating her support for continued dialogue between parliamentarians and civil society organizations.

4.2 National experiences: Chile and the Dominican Republic

4.2.1 Chile

Congresswoman Maria Antonieta Saa then took the floor to describe Chile's legislative experience in protecting women's rights. First, she said she was delighted to report that thanks to the efforts made by the women's movement to get women into ministerial posts, Chile now looks forward to the possibility of seeing a woman elected to the presidency of the Republic for the very first time.

In Chile, the reform of Articles 1 and 19 of the Constitution set the stage for changes in the laws that discriminate against women. Although Chile has ratified most international treaties concerning women, it has not ratified the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW; which was rejected following a lengthy debate.

With respect to family violence, the 1994 law remains largely inadequate to deal with this terrible problem, as indicated by the large number of murders of women, because of the emphasis on conciliation and mediation as solutions and because of the poor qualifications of the judges responsible for enforcing the law. A bill to reform the law is currently under study; it clearly defines the act of violence as a crime and eliminates the recourse to mediation, so that the law will serve its main purpose of punishing and protecting.

A law against sexual harassment in the workplace has also been passed, but it is not part of the criminal code. Other changes have been made in the area of sexual offences: adultery, which was strictly a women's crime, was taken out of the criminal code in 1990, and marital rape has been an offence under the criminal code since 1997, though reporting it is still sensitive from a social perspective. The issues surrounding parricide



and infanticide are also under review, as is a proposal to outlaw trafficking in women and the criminal gangs that engage in it.

With regard to other forms of discrimination, parliament is currently amending the marital partnership law, which defined the husband as the administrator of property. The government has also put forward a bill against all forms of discrimination, which would criminalize discriminatory actions and omissions. However, Congresswoman Saa noted that up to now, it had been impossible to pass legislation on sexual and reproductive rights, still a very controversial issue.

She concluded her address by stressing the importance of forging alliances between parliamentarians and civil society organizations, particularly with respect to family violence, and she noted that one had to be persistent in view of the slow pace of the legislative process: “Our experience, even though it takes ten years to pass a law, shows us what can be done and how to effectively discharge one of our responsibilities, which is to protect women’s rights.”

4.2.2 Dominican Republic

Congresswoman Cristina Lizardo spoke next, providing a summary of the Dominican Congress’s main legislative accomplishments in the area of women’s rights.

Despite police and government services for reporting abuse and protecting victims, violence against women is the second leading cause of death in the Dominican Republic. Economically speaking, women are paid less, and politically, the situation is even worse, as only 6.3% of senators and 16% of deputies are women. The gap is the same in candidacies, which hampers the election of women.

From a legislative perspective, the Dominican State has signed and ratified the major conventions on human and women’s rights, including the CEDAW and the Convention of Belém do Pará. Domestically, gender equality is entrenched in the Constitution, and the work done by the Congress for the advancement of women is reflected in the national plan for gender equality (PLANEO) and a number of laws.

Congresswoman Lizardo then listed a series of statutes enacted to protect women’s rights in the Dominican Republic: law 16/92, which amended the labour code; law 55/93 on HIV/AIDS; law 24/97, which amended agrarian laws to give women access to land and credit; law 66/97 (the education organization act), which establishes the principle of equality in education; law 86/99, which was particularly important since it converted the promotion-of-women branch into the secretariat of state for women, a high-level organization that coordinates the implementation of gender-equality policies and programs in each sector, at the inter-ministerial level and with civil society; and decree 974/01, which makes gender equality a government-wide issue by establishing a bureau for gender equality and development in each ministry.

She also mentioned the following legislation: law 12/00, which raised the quotas for women in parliamentary and municipal posts from 25% to 35%; law 13/00, which requires that 50% of mayors and deputy mayors be women; law 42/00 on the health care system; law 87/01, which established a social insurance system; law 189/01, which protects the inheritance of married women; law 76/02, which protects crime victims; law

88/03 on shelters; law 136/03, which protects children and teenagers; and law 137/03 on illicit trafficking in immigrants and other persons.

To ensure real protection of civil and political rights, Congress is working on an amendment to the electoral law which will harmonize implementation of the preferential vote with the quota system to achieve true parliamentary and municipal representation. The country's political parties are also undergoing similar reforms, due to the efforts of the women's alliance.

4.3 Discussion

Congresswomen Morales Castillo and de la Puente Haya of Peru, Capiberibe of Brazil, Marte of the Dominican Republic and Galfré of the Argentine province of Jujuy spoke during the discussion, moderated by Argentine Congresswoman Elda Susana Agüero.

The following points were made:

- Legislators are able to put forward creative, concrete solutions to the problem of women's rights violations and violence against women, as illustrated by the parliamentary ethics committee of Peru's Congress.
- Education is a key component of the campaign against violence, and it must be aimed at both men and women.
- Alliances between women from various parties generate greater bargaining power (e.g., in the Dominican Republic, the women members of the gender equality committee asked to sit on the committee reviewing the penal code, and their request was granted).
- Alliances between women parliamentarians and social organizations are needed to ensure that existing laws are implemented (e.g., the establishment of a women's centre that was mandated and budgeted for in Jujuy province's anti-violence law did not happen until legal action was taken to force the government's hand three years later).
- Controversies over issues such as abortion should not impede progress on less contentious matters.

4.4 Conclusions

1. It is indispensable for governments to guarantee citizens the rights enshrined in the international human rights treaties they have signed.
2. It is necessary to adapt local legislation and implement public policies to ensure that rights are effectively protected. The same is true of the international conferences of the United Nations or the Organization of American States, particularly when they sign an action plan or platform, such as at Beijing or Cairo.
3. Guaranteeing gender equity is an issue not only for women; overcoming discrimination is a concern for all of society and should be a priority objective and inescapable commitment for governments.
4. The main instrument in women's fight against discrimination and violence is the convention (CEDAW) and the protocol, which although it has not yet been approved in many countries, establishes operating mechanisms for the rights established in the convention, making its promotion indispensable.
5. Women are underrepresented in the corridors of power and this trickles down into the repetition of discriminatory practices and the lack of sufficient strength to solve the problem, by preventing policies or the absence of policies from deepening inequality.

Rapporteurs: Congresswomen Elda Susana Agüero & Margarita Stolbizer

5. Session 4: Building Women's Leadership



For the second day of discussions, focusing on the strengthening of women's political, economic and social leadership, the Argentine Congress opened the doors to representatives of civil society organizations. The session began with speeches by Ms. Gloria Young, a former parliamentarian of Panama and a member of the association of women parliamentarians, Uruguayan

Senator Margarita Percovich, and Ms. Marta Mas de Magliano, an Argentine economist and academic. It continued with a number of workshops in which parliamentarians and civil society representatives were invited to discuss tools for the advancement of women.

5.1 *Speeches*

5.1.1 *Ms. Gloria Young: Affirmative action for women's access to power in the political realm*

Ms. Young, a former parliamentarian of Panama, focused her address on building women's leaderships. She began by describing some characteristics that would be useful for women seeking political power, and then she put forward a series of proposals.

According to Ms. Young, the act of gaining awareness of their intrinsic qualities is an integral part of women's march to power. She noted that some of those qualities were being inclusive; knowing how to attract other women, especially young women, to politics; working tirelessly to achieve their own aspirations while lending support to others; taking care of day-to-day business; giving priority to education, health care and the environment; valuing transparency; and being a good listener, which contributes to consensual decision-making. This set of characteristics gives women the capability to create a new type of leadership and to overturn the status quo.

With regard to affirmative action, Ms. Young stressed the importance of educating women so that those who enter politics have the necessary tools. In Panama, women have succeeded in ensuring that 25% of the state funding for political parties is allocated to education, including 10% to the education of women. Ms. Young noted, however, that it was up to women to make sure that their own parties complied with the law.

Ms. Young also illustrated the value of associations of women parliamentarians and ex-parliamentarians, such as those in El Salvador and Panama. For example, the association of women parliamentarians and ex-parliamentarians of the Republic of Panama ensures that the law on education budgets is implemented, and through its membership in the national council of political parties and the national reform commission, it makes sure that the reports of the political parties show that the budget has been put to appropriate use. Ms. Young also emphasized the importance of strengthening the women's caucuses in political parties by giving them an adequate budget.

In conclusion, Ms. Young took advantage of the presence of representatives of civil society organizations and encouraged them to express their opinions and remind elected officials of their responsibilities: "You must not let us down and we must not forget where we came from."

5.1.2 *Ms. Marta Mas de Magliano: Leadership, networks and information technology*

Argentine economist Marta Mas began her address by referring to two key elements in women's access to political, economic and social leadership: access to and training in new technologies, and networking (bearing in mind that the gender equality issue must be incorporated into the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, and that indicators must be developed for that purpose.)

Ms. Mas pointed out that parity means putting not only women, but also men, through training programs, in particular to ensure that the relationship between husbands and wives is not damaged.



She described the progress accomplished in Argentina, not only in the political arena (as indicated in Congresswoman Camaño's presentation) but also in the private and academic sectors (the rectors of six national universities are women). For example, the fact that the CEO of Argentina's *Banco de la Nación* is a woman has simplified access to micro-credit, which may not be appealing from a purely economic standpoint but is a very welcome change for families and small and medium-sized businesses, many of which are headed by women.

With regard to networking, Ms. Mas noted that organizations and women leaders had a special responsibility to assist women who did not have the support of a father or husband to help them attain leadership positions. As an example, she pointed to the network of Latin American and Caribbean women managers of organizations, which provides courses to help women improve their standing in their country, along with a guide entitled GEM, developed to incorporate a gender perspective in the evaluation of social projects that use new information technologies.

5.1.3 Senator Margarita Percovich, Uruguay

Senator Percovich's presentation focused on the need to build and strengthen networks between social organizations, the academic community and women politicians for advancing the status of women so that each party does its share and coordinates its activities with the others.

According to Ms. Percovich, one role of social organizations is to help parliamentarians understand social realities, so as to guide discussions in political parties and promote the integration of a gender-equality perspective in public policy. Input by the research community is also essential to determine where the obstacles and bottlenecks that limit access to government programs are.

The Senator pointed out how difficult it was, because of traditions and the deep-seated patriarchal system, to transpose a day-to-day problem to a legal framework that might lead to concrete change in penal or civil codes, as was the case in the campaign against violence against women in Uruguay.

In her view, access to information, technology and education is also a key to gender equality. The experience of the network of Uruguayan women politicians with courses on the workings of government, law-making and public policy implementation is a good example of the transmission of knowledge.

Senator Percovich ended her address by urging participants to challenge the status quo so that, through the formation of networks, women can achieve the independence they desire.

5.2 Reports of the Workshops



Civil society participants and parliamentarians formed three workshops to discuss women's access to political, economic and social leadership. The conclusions of the three groups, reproduced below, were reported by Congresswoman Quezada of Honduras (workshop 1), Congresswoman Donis of Guatemala (workshop 2) and Senator Mendoza de Acha of Paraguay (workshop 3).

First Workshop

1. For leadership, it is necessary to have access to education, training, and financial resources that help to promote positive actions.
2. We must promote gender solidarity, equity, and justice, obtaining support from the social communications media to ensure the eradication of domestic violence and the distribution of family responsibilities, and greater internal democracy in political parties.
3. We must promote voting by women and also allow them to participate actively in organized civil society.
4. Communications strategies must be promoted through the efficient use of the media and the gender approach.
5. Three characteristics necessary for leadership: ethics, equity, and efficiency.
6. We must obtain government resources to finance political activities to ensure equitable access by male and female candidates.
7. Women in politics need strategic partnerships with women in social organizations, interacting to achieve common objectives.

Rapporteur : Congresswoman María Dilma Quezada (Honduras)



Second Workshop

It is necessary to:

1. Promote greater social awareness of human rights in general and women's rights in particular.
2. Break with old patterns and promote the worth and self-determination of women, creating solidarity among them.
3. Seek partnerships and co-participation with civil society, consensus and common objectives.
4. Plan and build confidence through closer identification of women with social issues.
5. Strengthen women leaders through better training.
6. Form partnerships with women who work in the media, to promote rights, interests, and objectives.
7. Establish within parties the distribution of funds to finance campaigns for women.

Rapporteur : Congresswoman Lilian Elizabeth Donis (Guatemala)

Third Workshop

1. Women need to create their own style of politics, which promotes female qualities, i.e. the ability to listen, transparency, discipline and honesty. We will win respect from society if we raise our self-esteem, considering ourselves to be subjects of law and inculcating the idea of complementarity with men, through symmetrical relations.
2. The construction of women's leaderships lies in not permitting men to decide for us. We are independent. We need our own agenda. We should educate ourselves.
3. We must promote transparent, honest leadership, and access to education for all citizens.
4. Training for women, not to change or adapt, but to obtain knowledge about how to govern is necessary.
5. Women must have communications strategies and ensure compliance with the moral contract represented by votes, to re-establish the credibility of politicians.
6. It is important to support positive leaderships rather than sham ones, and to not leave the drawing up candidates rosters solely in the hands of men.

Rapporteur : Senator Ana María Mendoza de Acha (Paraguay)

6. Other Business

6.1 Declaration of Peruvian Members of Congress at the Second Regional Forum of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas

Peruvian Congresswoman Elvira de la Puente Haya took the floor to present a declaration signed by 71 of the 117 members of the Peruvian Congress for the Second Regional Forum of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, in which the parliamentarians expressed support for the reservations stated by Peru at the world conferences in Beijing, Cairo and Copenhagen and the regional conference in Mar del Plata concerning, in particular, the use of the term “gender equity”. The declaration, which was distributed to the participants, is reproduced in the appendix. An electronic copy of the original document with signatures can be obtained through the Virtual Parliament site at www.e-fipa.org.

6.2 Invitation to attend the Gender Forum of the Americas

Congresswoman Margarita Stolbizer invited the parliamentarians to attend the Gender Forum of the Americas, to be held in Buenos Aires from April 7 to 9, 2005, as part of the process to prepare civil society for the Fourth Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata.

6.3 Reading

Argentine Congresswoman Olinda Montenegro recited for participants one of her poems dedicated to illiterate women. The poem is included in the book entitled *Alfabetización Reparadora*, a copy of which was presented to each participant by the Argentine Congress.

7. Closing Address



In her closing address, Senator Silvia Hernández congratulated the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas on creating a discussion forum for women. She noted that women’s access to leadership was the sign of a mature democracy capable of embracing leaders with different, effective and complementary styles.

She thanked Congresswoman Margarita Stolbizer for proposing the idea of Regional Forums, Congressman Luis Molinari Romero and Senator Céline Hervieux-Payette for giving it the attention it deserved, and the Argentine Congress for making it possible.

Finally, she invited the participating parliamentarians to join their colleagues from across the Americas to discuss the economic and political issues affecting the peoples of the region at FIPA’s Fourth Plenary Assembly in Brasilia from May 19 to 21, 2005.

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8. Appendixes

8.1 Appendix 1: List of Participants¹

Parliamentarians:

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| <p style="text-align: center;">Argentina</p> <p>Congresswoman Elda Susana Agüero Congresswoman Graciela Camaño Congresswoman María Teresa Ferrín Congresswoman Cinthya Gabriela Hernández Congressman Luis Arturo Molinari Romero Congresswoman Olinda Montenegro Congresswoman Rosario Romero Congresswoman Margarita Stolbizer Congresswoman Alicia Tate</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Bolivia</p> <p>Congresswoman Elsa Guevara Aguirre</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Brazil</p> <p>Congresswoman Iara Bernardi Congresswoman Janete Capiberibe Congresswoman Edna Macedo Congresswoman Zelinda Novaes Congresswoman Gorete Pereira Senator Sherys Shhessarenko</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Chile</p> <p>Congresswoman Maria Antonieta Saa</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Costa Rica</p> <p>Assemblywoman Kyra De La Rosa Alvarado Assemblywoman Maria Elena Núñez Chaves</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Cuba</p> <p>Assemblywoman Nieves Argelia Alemañy Aguilera</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">El Salvador</p> <p>Assemblywoman Blanca Flor Bonilla Assemblywoman Marta Lillian Coto Vda. De Cuellar Assemblywoman Mariela Peña Pinto Assemblywoman Victoria Ruiz De Amaya</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Écuador</p> <p>Congresswoman Denny Cevallos Capurro</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Guatemala</p> <p>Congresswoman Gloria Marina Barrillas Carías de Duarte Congresswoman Lilian Elizabeth Donis Congresswoman Nineth Varenca Montenegro Cottóm</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Honduras</p> <p>Congresswoman Gillian Guifarro Montes de Oca Congresswoman María Dilma Quezada</p> |

¹ Please note that the list of civil society organization representatives who took part in the April 8th discussions is unavailable.

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| Mexico Senator Luisa María Calderón Senator Noemí Guzmán Senator Silvia Hernández | Paraguay Senator Adriana Hercilia Franco de Fernández Senator Ana María Mendoza de Acha Congresswoman Marilyn Victoria Rejala Altemburger |
| Peru Congresswoman Elvira De la Puente Haya Congresswoman Fabiola Morales Castillo | Dominican Republic Congresswoman Cristina Lizardo Congresswoman Josefina Marte Congresswoman Olga Torres |
| Uruguay Senator Margarita Percovich | Venezuela Assemblywoman Desiree Santos Amaral Assemblywoman Maria Iris Varela Rangel |
| Andean Parliament (Ecuador) Andean Parliamentarian Juana Maria Vallejo Klaere | Legislative Assembly of Jujuy (Argentina) Assemblywoman Ada Cecilia Galfré |

Experts:

| | |
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| Association of women parliamentarians and ex-parliamentarians of the Republic of Panama Ms. Gloria Young | Documentation and research centre (Paraguay) Ms. Line Bareiro |
| Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defence of Women's Rights (CLADEM) Ms. Susana Chiarotti | Inter-American Commission of Women Ms. Mercedes Kremenetzky |
| University of Buenos Aires Ms. Marta Mas de Magliano | |

FIPA Secretariat:

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Ms. Emmanuelle Pelletier | |
|--------------------------|--|



8.2 Appendix 2: Opening Speeches

8.2.1 Speech given by Ms. Margarita Stolbizer, Chair of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas and member of the federal Congress of Argentina

Original Language: Spanish

We will begin the Second Regional Forum of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas and I will tell you about possible changes to this program.

We are very grateful for the participation of all the women parliamentarians who have come from many countries in Central and South America.

I particularly want to thank the sponsors of this meeting: the Congress of Argentina, the Government of Canada, the World Bank Institute, the Organization of American States, the Parliament of Finland and the Canadian Parliamentary Centre.

Representing the women in the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas, I am going to announce the rest of the program and I want to tell you briefly about how the women's group was created in FIPA.

The women's group started with the concern of the president of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas, Senator Céline Hervieux-Payette, who saw the need to create a specific group that would provide a gender perspective on the issues being considered in the various working groups of FIPA at the plenary assemblies.

From there and on the initiative of various women in countries of the Americas, we also realized that we had to set up a specific working group of women parliamentarians, with its own agenda, whose primary purpose would be to analyze the impact of various policies on all women, especially in countries in the region. Thus, we wanted to analyze, for example, the impact of the financial crises in many countries of the Americas on women, how the structural poverty in many countries and our nations' indebtedness affected women.

This group of women parliamentarians was created in FIPA and has already met twice at the same time as the plenary assemblies, where we discussed these subjects to see how to work and be more effective in parliaments and as parliamentarians for the equitable development of our regions.

We realized that we had very little time and that our meetings at the last two plenary assemblies were not useful: we could not cover all the topics in two or three hours of plenaries. Therefore we thought about holding two specific forums for women parliamentarians of the Americas, at which we could have a much broader debate on each of these subjects.

That is how we decided to meet this year in two regional forums. A few days ago the forum for North America and the Caribbean met in Barbados, with many women parliamentarians from that region attending, and today we are inaugurating this regional forum for Central and South America.

It is no coincidence and you will surely have noticed the importance of the topics that we have chosen for this forum, which is meant to be a place for sharing experiences.

Each of our panels will have an expert who will make a presentation on the theme of each session, and then the parliamentarians from the various countries will talk about their experiences, followed by open discussion.

The topics chosen are related to the political representation of women and the need to recognize the barriers or obstacles to their more decisive participation on issues fundamentally related to power.

As we said at our opening meeting yesterday, we believe that the great challenge of improving the institutions in our respective countries depends on strengthening the leadership of women in political parties, which in turn will become stronger and improve our institutional system.

It is also true that when we refer to the political representation of women and the possibility of having quotas or affirmative action, we are not just talking about numbers but about quality. Therefore it is a qualitative issue which has to do with improving the institutional system of political parties and making it more effective and better so that democracy is stronger in our region.

The second topic is related to poverty and employment, both of which have been a key concern of the women's group throughout this period. Given the impact of the economic and social crises in the region, which directly affect our families, it is necessary to analyze how women have gone about overcoming this situation, in many cases going to work in extremely precarious conditions.

Especially in recent years, women have joined the labor market without any legal protection and therefore end up being the poorest of the poor. Of course, they suffer from severe discrimination when it comes to improving their working conditions.

It is also true that the search for greater equality for women cannot and must not be an isolated struggle or a battle of the sexes, but must be part of a struggle for greater equality for all.

We still note that the discrimination which exists in our societies is equally unjust and intolerable, whether it is against women, young people, adults, the disabled or the poor, and that we must fight for equality as a whole.

The debate in this second session on poverty and unemployment is also meant so that this forum can make recommendations to our plenary assembly, with a view to the Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata, Argentina in November, which will be attended by all the heads of state in our hemisphere. The main topic of that meeting is precisely employment as a way to fight poverty.

The third session, or third panel, is concerned with human rights and violence. We believe that it is essential to recognize the obstacles and the situation of women's rights so that we can effectively exercise, or at least build, a democracy that is not merely a formal system but that can meet the most basic social needs.

Tomorrow we will have a meeting open to social organizations in which we will discuss how to develop political and social leadership, what are the mechanisms and, after the three presentations in the morning, we will go into workshops to fine-tune the results.



I do not want to say much more, but I repeat our belief that this is a place that depends on building a contract: it is necessary to rebuild a contract between women and men for the sake of greater equality and freedom.

We also believe that this is not an isolated or solitary endeavor but rather a cooperative and mutually supporting one, because our goal definitely is to improve democratic governance and the political party system so that it can really meet our constituents' most basic daily needs.

To have a real democracy, one that guarantees equitable development, one must admit that democracy is incompatible with any form of domination. Of course, democracy must be the means to oppose any manifestation of inequality, discrimination or domination.

I conclude with a very short story from *La Autoridad* by the great Latin American writer Eduardo Galeano. He says: "In ancient times, women sat in the bow of the boat and men at the stern. Women hunted and fished. They left their villages and returned when they were able or willing. Men built the huts, prepared the food, kept the fires lit to keep out the cold, took care of the children and tanned hides for clothing and shelter. That was the way of life among the Ona and Yahgan Indians in Tierra del Fuego until one day the men killed all the women and put on the masks that the women had invented to terrify them. Only the newborn girls were saved from the slaughter. While they were growing up, the killers kept telling them that their fate was to serve men, and they believed it. Their daughters and granddaughters also believed it."

To open this gathering, I give the floor to the senator from Mexico, Silvia Hernández, who will speak for the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas.

8.2.2 Speech given by Ms. Silvia Hernández, member of FIPA's Executive Committee and Senator of Mexico, on behalf of the President of FIPA

Original Language: Spanish

First of all, I wish to thank Congresswoman Margarita Stolbizer and say how pleased and honored I am to have the distinguished Senator Mirian Curletti and Congressman Luis Molinari Romero at this forum.

Dear colleagues: secondly, on behalf of our president Céline Hervieux-Payette, I send her warmest greetings and love to each of you. She called as she was about to board a plane, when an unforeseen situation prevented her from coming to Buenos Aires. This really happened right in the airport, due to something beyond her control. She personally asked her office staff to fax me her speech so that I could read it to you here.

On seeing it, and on listening to Margarita Stolbizer, I realize how influential these two women are in this forum. I say this because Céline's speech began and continued the same themes as Margarita Stolbizer. She told me that after sending her greetings and apologies, I should express her thanks. These covered everything, but Céline instructed me to single out some for special thanks. In particular, we thank the World Bank Institute, the Democracy and Political Affairs Department of the OAS, the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Canada and the Canadian International Development Agency, and especially the Congress of Argentina for offering us its building and its support in every way to make this meeting possible.

Céline wants to say, and I fully concur, that she is particularly pleased that FIPA's regional president, Luis Molinari Romero, has given his support on the Executive Committee so that these meetings could go ahead, and of course is pleased with the work of Margarita Stolbizer.

Margarita Stolbizer is the one who launched this aspect of FIPA's work. It was her concept, her idea and her leadership that made FIPA clearly realize that women and women parliamentarians need a space to deal with their issues.

Senator Céline Hervieux-Payette wants to tell Margarita Stolbizer that she is appreciated and recognized and she wants to thank her for her leadership in front of all of you.

One day this congresswoman went to Ottawa with the idea of telling FIPA that the women parliamentarians of this hemisphere, of the Americas, needed to bring the views of women to hemispheric politics and also to develop women's own agenda.

I believe that she spoke about it correctly. We women parliamentarians in FIPA feel that some progress has been made, in that almost all parliaments have committees on gender issues that try to include women's opinions and perspectives and to develop a common hemispheric terminology on gender policies.

I have the feeling, which I am sharing here, that we could complement this by participating on other committees. I don't know if this has happened to you, and it is not the time to talk about my country's experience--I will have an opportunity to do so a little later--but I believe that at this opening session it is worth saying how essential our participation on other committees is to carrying out this work.

When we talk about poverty, it is all very well to say that women are the poorest of the poor, since this is quite true. If we work on the finance or budget committee and bring a gender perspective to it, that is precisely where we should insist that public policy is reflected in budget items and funding for education, realizing that girls often have to quit school early. This is where resources should be allocated so that rules are in place encouraging girls to stay in school.

Committees dealing with economic or trade issues are the place to advocate gender-sensitive policies, to point out that micro-business on which our economy is based is largely run by women. When we talk about funding for small business, we women will clearly understand that it is vital for our progress.

Women are affected by the issues addressed by just about every parliamentary committee. It is not enough to have committees on gender issues, since they often deal only with women's issues, and our fellow parliamentarians see us as women in the Department of Women, and similarly in the national Parliament. However, I still maintain that having such a committee is progress. For example, it is important that we women have a gender-based approach when we discuss ratifying a free-trade treaty, and that we know that the most competitive companies win, because the treaty is designed for that: to compete, and those in the strongest position win.

If we do not have a woman's vision, we can hardly give women, at their various levels of participation, what they need to compete: technological development, training for their human capital, how they can become involved in the real competitive system, etc.



We are trying to have an overview of women's issues in Parliament. We cannot all sit on the committees dealing with gender issues and we cannot all be on those concerned with the economy, finance, trade, education or health. Maybe women are more often on education or health committees, because the idea persists that women are more inclined to culture, education or health, and few of us want to serve on other committees or do not know how to go about it. But this can be an assignment for us and I believe that this is something we must discuss at this meeting. Beyond a general approach to gender and to national and hemispheric affairs, we must think of what we have to do as women parliamentarians. Parliaments make decisions and set public policies, and that is what we must focus on.

Céline Hervieux-Payette says it very well, and repeats it in the speech which she sent me: we must stress that this is not a women's club, although there would be nothing wrong with that. This is not a women's club, but it is a meeting of women, and not just any kind of woman. These are winners, competent, successful, intelligent, outstanding women.

This is a gathering of the finest women in the Americas. Here we are working on issues of importance to our countries. These national issues must include us as women. If they did not, they would be myopic. The policies and decisions would atrophy, they would be partial and incomplete. We need to be there and they need our input.

Friends, on behalf of Céline Hervieux-Payette, I want to wish you and us every success, and I do not see why we should not succeed, since we usually have what it takes to come out ahead. This meeting today will be a success for you and for those who called us to gather here.

8.2.3 Speech given by Mr. Luis Arturo Molinari Romero, member of FIPA's Executive Committee and member of the federal Congress of Argentina

Original Language: Spanish

I am in an unusual situation in this room but am really honored to be here.

First of all, I want to welcome all of you to our country, which takes pride in being a leader in women's participation in politics. This leadership is the result mainly of the struggle of women themselves from all political parties, without any distinction whatever.

I must mention two people who in the history of Argentina did a great deal for the participation of women. They are no longer living. One was a socialist, Alicia Moreau de Justo; the other was Eva Duarte, wife of Juan Perón. These two women no doubt paved the way which over the years has led to the effective participation of women in Argentina's political life.

I believe that the battle for formal representation, even though inequalities persist in every country--not all countries are in the same situation or have the problem to the same degree--must be fought not only by you, but FIPA must make it an issue to increase women's participation in every Congress and Parliament, to sustain the participation that you are demanding.

As Silvia Hernández said recently, we have to make a quantum leap as an organization. We must ensure that the concept of substantive representation that originated at the meeting in Beijing becomes a reality and, as Silvia also said, goes far beyond sitting on the education, health or culture committees. Every public policy of our governments must be sensitive to gender issues.

We need the viewpoint of women: it is not a concession from our political systems but an absolute necessity.

This meeting of FIPA is meant to make this forum stronger, as a meeting place for men and women who represent their constituents in Congress or Parliament.

This implies that beyond meetings like this, all parliamentarians attending form relationships that will be fruitful and lasting.

I cannot fail to mention two very significant events for us this year. The first one is the Plenary Assembly of FIPA in Brasilia, in our sister republic of Brazil. We call for very effective participation at that meeting, not only from members of Congress but from women parliamentarians. As I said, this meeting will take place from May 19 to 21.

We really want to have a significant presence from each of our parliaments, not only because of the subjects to be discussed but also because it is the first time that foreign debt is on FIPA's agenda as an urgent reality for our countries, which must have a gender perspective and representation in Brasilia.

The second event, which Ms. Stolbizer mentioned, is the Summit of the Americas near the end of this year in our country. FIPA needs to come to this meeting with a very strong delegation from parliaments throughout our hemisphere, from Canada to Argentina in the far south, including our sister republic Chile, and try to influence our countries' decision making.

Although the Summit of the Americas is a meeting of heads of state, they are there to represent our countries as a whole. Therefore it is very important that this year at each of these events, starting with this one, we can discuss, debate and draw conclusions to prepare for these two meetings.

I will conclude my brief statement here. I want to say with absolute conviction that democracy in Latin America depends on women successfully playing a leading role. Without their leadership, democracy in Latin America will not be strong in the coming years.

Welcome to Argentina. I hope that you will enjoy these meetings and also our hospitality.

8.2.4 Speech given by the Honourable Miriam Curletti, vice-president of the Senate of the Argentine nation

Original Language: Spanish

Thank you for allowing me to attend this forum. I want to welcome all the women attending and commend them for being here at this important event.

This forum is meant to give us a chance to think about how we legislators, taking into account our local and regional particularities, can implement gender equity policies and



promote women's leadership, broadening and strengthening their participation in places where power is exercised and decisions are made.

We must try to meet the challenge of reaching consensus on actions and proposals for effective progress toward equal opportunity in the context of Latin American integration, in which women have been relegated to the background.

Regional integration involves designing institutions, rules and procedures that promote growth and development. In this regard, we ask what is the role of women in the integration processes and, more specifically, what is the role of women politicians in the integration institutions. On this point, we notice a disparity: institutions for regional and Latin American integration can exist without necessarily including women's perspective in places where power is exercised and decisions are made.

Including women on the parliamentary agenda used to mean including and promoting women's issues, like reproductive health, discrimination, domestic violence, early childhood, disability, etc. When women become involved in economic aspects, the discussion goes beyond issues of integration itself. Purely economic considerations give way to the human dimension, realizing that people are the key. This is what Silvia Hernández was calling for.

The requirements facing us in various fields involve individual efforts but also the need to work together through networks, like those in this forum, to enhance cooperation and sharing of experience and knowledge.

The strategy to strengthen democratic governance shows us the need for innovative, creative and flexible leadership and also teamwork, to encourage others and provide clarity about what needs to be done. This is what the women's parliamentary group is doing.

Women's leadership implies rethinking how to act and including strategies in which we focus, facilitate, synergize and co-create. One condition of democratic governance is the ability to participate. Participation must be without any exclusion. Citizens have the right to decide and make their own individual choices while respecting the common good.

We note that since ancient times in the governing councils of various countries and city-states, power was concentrated and left women "disempowered." Nevertheless, despite everything, against all odds, women realized that the battle for inclusion meant being themselves so that others could be themselves too. In the search for parity, various strategies were developed. Some have led to progress but also call for new strengths and pose new challenges.

This group of women parliamentarians of the Americas is the most concrete example of the quest for empowerment and new forms of participation, where the logic of equal opportunity leads to structural reforms of the gender system.

By applying the gender dimension to public policies, we seek to assess their impact on the sexes, to avoid unintended negative consequences and to improve all policies and make them more effective. We representatives of South and Central America meet here today, burdened by debts, mistakes and neglect. We are now engaged in another struggle, another battle, which in terms of thought and action means serving and looking out for those who have been left behind and need us.

Each and every one of us is an example of service to others, but let me join Silvia Hernández in expressing respect for Margarita Stolbizer, whose leadership has brought sure victories. Like a lay prophet or a bullfighter without a cape, she breaks into history with serene conviction and an unflagging sense of responsibility. All of you in the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas embody the necessary struggle and point to the desired harvest, and as the poet would say, the seeds you sow are the required leavening agent.

For each of you, for those who will come after, let me wax poetic on this theme. "Woman, if I had to describe you, I would say that you are all in one. At your breast, the child satisfies its hunger. At your breast, man's passion is aroused. If I had to describe you, woman, I would say that you are a branch bearing shoots, a mouth at which the lover sobs and is sated. If I had to describe you, woman, I would say that you are earth, heady wine, a spreading heartbeat or pulse, a fist that does not hurt, fatigue that does not show, a chain that does not imprison. Oh, woman, if I had to describe you, I would simply say that you are all in one."



8.3 Appendix 3: Declaration of the members of Congress of the Republic of Peru at the Second Regional Forum of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas

(Presented by Congresswoman Elvira de la Puente Haya on April 8, 2005, and signed by 71 members of the Peruvian Congress)

Original Language: Spanish

“The undersigned delegates from the Republic of Peru, on the occasion of the **Second Regional Forum of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas on “Women’s Leadership to Strengthen Democratic Governance”, RATIFY THE RESERVATIONS²** expressed by the Delegation from Peru at the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing in accordance with the position taken at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, and the Sixth Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean in Mar del Plata, and request that the **terms “Gender” and “Gender equity” be replaced with “EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEN AND WOMEN”**, in light of the following considerations:

1. In almost all of the recent documents originating from the United Nations, we find the word “gender” combined with others such as “perspective”, “equity”, “focus”, “ideology”, etc.
2. As there is no clear and precise definition of the word “gender” and of its intended use, and understanding the origin of this ideology in the attempt to impose it at the World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), we view this word as ambiguous and somewhat unclear.
3. In this conference devoted to women, the word “woman” was replaced with “gender”. We feel that if laws are going to be made on behalf of women—to give them the place that is rightfully theirs—we must begin by using the correct word to refer to them, a word that is also understood by all.
4. In Peru, as in other countries in the region³, use of the concept of “gender”, which has been a subject of debate since the World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), has been and continues to be viewed as confusing and subject to various interpretations.
5. The position of Peru is not new. As early as the Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean held in Mar del Plata in September 1994—whose final document was completed in Santiago, Chile on November 16-18 of that year—Peru presented its reservations with respect to use of the term “gender perspective”, given its ambiguity.
6. The strongest evidence that there is a lack of consensus regarding the use of “gender” lies in the fact that at the request of various states, we are succeeding

² Copy attached of the Reservations to the Final Document and the Platform for Action of Beijing. (*This note was part of the original declaration. This report does not include the mentioned appendix.*)

³ Argentina, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Paraguay presented reservations on the use of this term.

in obtaining clarification of the meaning assigned to “Gender” as a requirement for signing agreements and treaties in which that term figures.

7. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, for example, which has been signed by Peru, expressly states: *“for the purpose of this Statute, it is understood that the term “gender” refers to the two sexes, male and female, within the context of society. The term “gender” does not indicate any meaning different from the above” (Art. 7.3).*
8. At the domestic level, taking into account that “gender” includes men and women, and that it is necessary for the contents of documents that will be binding upon our population to be very clear and not susceptible to future “interpretations”, and in accordance with the above observations, in both the *Acuerdo Nacional Perú* [Peru National Agreement]⁴ and various legislative proposals, we have opted for terms about which there is consensus and which do not lend themselves to any confusion whatsoever, such as **“Equal Opportunities for Men and Women”**, when we are seeking to promote non-discrimination, and “Women”, when we are attempting to come up with specific legislation for them.

We therefore restate to the Table that we request replacement of the terms “gender” and “gender equity” with “equal opportunities for men and women”, with the understanding that this does not alter the nature or meaning of the proposal, with which we are in total agreement, and that it will facilitate approval by consensus of the conclusions and recommendations reached.

Lima, 31 March 2005.”

⁴ Forum in which various government institutions, political parties, organized civil society, churches, and trade organizations, etc. participate to agree upon medium and long-term policies.



8.4 Appendix 4: Program of the Second Regional Forum

Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas
 Second Regional Forum (Central and South America)

“Women’s Leadership to Strengthen Democratic Governance”

Buenos Aires, Argentina – April 6 – 8, 2005

Chamber of Deputies
 Dr. Juan Carlos Pugliese Annex
 25 Riobamba, Room 1, 2nd floor, Suite 227
 Buenos Aires

Objectives:

- To build the capacity of parliamentarians to promote and implement gender-equity policies, through the sharing of experiences and best practices
- To assess the advancement of women thus far and identify key growth areas and tools for their participation in leadership and decision-making
- To submit recommendations to the Plenary Assembly of FIPA, with a view to the Fourth Summit of the Americas (Mar del Plata, Argentina, November 4 and 5, 2005) on “Creating Employment to Confront Poverty and Strengthen Democratic Governance”

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| Program |
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| <p>Wednesday, April 6, 2005 Arrival of participants. 6:00 pm Welcoming cocktail, <i>Dining Room of the Dr. Juan Carlos Pugliese Annex to the Chamber of Deputies. 25 Riobamba 25, 5th floor</i></p> <p>§ Opening remarks from the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, Mr. Eduardo Oscar Camaño</p> |
| <p>Thursday, April 7, 2005 9:00 am Registration of participants</p> |

10:00 am Opening ceremony

- **Deputy Margarita Stolbizer**, Chair of FIPA's Group of Women Parliamentarians
- **Senator Céline Hervieux-Payette**, President of FIPA
- **Deputy Luis Molinari Romero**, Member of FIPA's Executive Committee
- **Senator Miriam Curletti**, Deputy Speaker of the Senate of Argentina

10:45 am Coffee break

First Session: *Women in Power and Decision-Making: Representation of women in the region's parliaments. Identifying and removing barriers.*

11:00 – 11:40 am Presentations

- **Line Bareiro**, Documentation and Study Centre (Paraguay): Overcoming adversity: building women's leadership

National experiences:

- **Deputy Graciela Camaño**, Chamber of Deputies of Argentina
- **Senator Silvia Hernández**, Senate of Mexico
- **Senator Ana María Mendoza de Acha**, Senate of Paraguay

11:40 am – 1:00 pm Debate and wrap-up

1:00 – 2:30 pm Lunch, *Senate Dining Room*
1849 Hipólito Irigoyen, 1st floor

Second session: *Women, Poverty and Employment Generation: The role of parliaments in reducing poverty among women and creating jobs.*

2:30 – 3:00 pm Presentations

- **Mercedes Kremenetzky**, Inter-American Commission of Women (ICW), Organization of American States (OAS)

National experiences:

- **Deputy Elsa María Guevara Aguirre**, Chamber of Deputies of Bolivia
- **Deputy Iara Bernardi**, Chamber of Deputies of Brazil
- **Deputy Blanca Flor Bonilla**, Legislative Assembly of El Salvador

3:10 – 4:30 pm Debate and wrap-up

4:30 – 4:50 pm Coffee break

Third session: *Human Rights of Women & Violence Against Women.*

4:50 – 5:30 pm: Presentations



- **Susana Chiarotti**, Regional Coordination of the Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defence of Women's Rights (CLADEM)

National experiences:

- **Deputy Maria Antonieta Saa**, Chamber of Deputies of Chile
- **Deputy Cristina Lizardo**, Chamber of Deputies of the Dominican Republic

5:30 – 6:50 pm Debate and wrap-up

7:00 pm Reception hosted by S.E. Yves Gagnon, Ambassador of Canada in Argentina, Embassy of Canada, 2828 Tagle

Friday, April 8, 2005

Day open to representatives of civil society

9:30 – 10:00 am Registration of participants

Fourth session: *Training women leaders: Enhancing women's political, economic and social leadership.*

10:00 – 10:40 am Presentations

- **Gloria Young**, Association of Parliamentarians and Ex-Parliamentarians of the Republic of Panama: ***Affirmative action for women to gain access to power in the political sphere***
- **Senator Margarita Percovich**, Senate of Uruguay
- **Marta Mas**, Economist and University Professor

10:40 – 12:00 am Debate and wrap-up

12:00 – 12:30 pm Press conference

12:00 – 1:30 pm Lunch, *Dining Room in the Dr. Juan Carlos Pugliese Annex to the Chamber of Deputies, 25 Riobamba, 5th floor*

2:00 – 3:00 pm Evaluatory discussion and presentation of final conclusions and recommendations

3:00 pm Adjournment and farewell

Sponsors of the Second Regional Forum of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas:

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