

Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas



Final Report

First Regional Forum

(Caribbean and North America)
Bridgetown, Barbados, March 20-22, 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 of FIPA
First Regional Forum (Caribbean & North America)*

Enhancing Women's Leadership to Strengthen Democracy

Bridgetown (Barbados), March 20-22, 2005

FIPA's Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas
First Regional Forum (Caribbean and North America)
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Acknowledgement

The FIPA Secretariat would like to extend a warm thank you to Senator Sandra Husbands and her team at Corporate Communications Consultants for all their hard work in organizing this event.

We would also like to thank the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC), the Department of Foreign Affairs of Canada, Gems of Barbados, Plastic Packaging Inc., the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), and Scotiabank, for their generous financial contributions.

Without their assistance the forum could not have taken place.

Finally, let us express our sincere gratitude to all of the parliamentarians, experts and representatives of the business, civil and academic communities who, by sharing their ideas and expertise, enabled us to both meet and surpass the objectives of this event.

Nota Bene

The content of this report has been put together by the FIPA Secretariat and contains only a resume of the presentations and debates which took place March 21st and 22nd, 2005. The full text of many of the presentations and links to related information are available on the Virtual Parliament, accessible through the FIPA website at www.e-fipa.org.

Original: English

1. Introduction

The First Regional Forum of FIPA's Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas was held in Bridgetown, Barbados, the 21st-22nd of March, 2005. The meeting, which was hosted by FIPA Executive Committee Member Senator Sandra Husbands, of Barbados, was held over two days at the Savannah Hotel. The first day of the meeting included over 23 women and men parliamentarians from 11 countries in the Caribbean and North America. When the meeting was opened to the public on the second day the parliamentarians were joined by 17 women from the private, academic, governmental and non-governmental communities. (See the list of countries and delegates in Appendix 1. See the program in Appendix 2.)

Created in 2002 during FIPA's First Plenary Assembly, the Group of Women Parliamentarians has since met during each FIPA Plenary Assembly to discuss the role of women in parliament, politics and FIPA. The group is currently chaired by Argentinean Parliamentarian Margarita Stolbizer, who also hosted the Second Regional Forum of the Group of Women Parliamentarians, held in the Argentinean Congress in Buenos Aires, April 6-8, 2005. (See Appendix 3 for more about the Group of Women Parliamentarians)

The First Regional Forum of FIPA's Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas had as its objectives:

- To create a forum for women parliamentarians of the Americas to advance the regional gender-equality agenda for shaping the direction and character of emerging societies of the 21st century
- 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

2. Opening Ceremony



The first day of the First Regional Forum of FIPA's Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas was attended by parliamentarians and invited experts.

Senator Sandra Husbands, representative of the host country and member of the FIPA Executive Committee, welcomed the participants, thanking them for their participation and outlining the format for the event.



Senator Céline Hervieux-Payette, representative of Canada and President of FIPA, then gave a brief description of the organization and the work of the Women's Group, emphasising the importance of greater participation by women in FIPA and the need to strengthen women's political leadership in the Americas. (See Appendix 4 for the speech of Senator Hervieux -Payette.)

The Honourable Elizabeth Thompson-McDowald, Minister of Housing and the Environment of Barbados, gave a moving opening address for the participants, relating her own experiences as a woman in politics and emphasising the importance of nurturing a more positive image of women, both in politics and in general. The Minister's speech touched on a variety of subjects, from the way women politicians are portrayed in the media, to a recent UK study linking women's involvement in companies, to higher productivity, to the value placed on women and the feminisation of poverty. The powerful and emotional presentation inspired those present and set the tone for the rest of the event.

Finally, Mrs. Jeanette Bell, Coordinator for the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) *Canada Caribbean Gender Program for Barbados and the OECS*, gave an introductory talk about moving forward on the regional and international agenda for gender equality. In her presentation she outlined major agreements, actions and issues related to the international gender equality agenda, including the *United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*, the *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Belém do Para)*, and the *Beijing Conference "Platform for Action"*.

Mrs. Bell emphasized that, rather than re-inventing the wheel, parliamentarians should make use of existing tools in their work for gender equality. She encouraged participants to familiarise themselves with and make use of such tools and called for parliamentarians to work with gender interest groups to ensure parliamentary support for the various conventions and action plans already in place for advancing women's interests. At the request of those present Mrs. Bell provided a valuable list of reference material (Available in Appendix 5), including the text of several major agreements and analytical references on the subject gender equality.

3. First Session: Women in Power and Decision-Making

3.1 Expert Presentation - Representation of Women in Parliaments of the Region: Recognition and Removal of Obstacles

Mrs. Gaietry Pargass, Social Affairs Officer for the Port of Spain office of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), made a presentation about the representation of women in parliaments of the region in which she reviewed the progress of the Caribbean in increasing the number of women in parliament and politics, detailing the gains and losses in women's political involvement over the past 5-10 years.



Mrs. Pargass gave an overview of some of the factors contributing to the statistics, including quota systems and barriers to women's involvement in politics such as family and child care, traditional gender roles, the combative nature of political culture and partisan politics, funding and fundraising, inadequate preparation for leadership, lack of exposure to the political process and lack of support for women candidates, even from women and women's organisations. Mrs. Pargass recommended working to make the political environment more welcoming to women, emphasizing the need for mentoring and support and the need for mechanisms to help educate women about the political process and how to get involved.

In the end Mrs. Pargass concluded that "progress in women's increased participation in the Parliaments of the Caribbean has been slow, notwithstanding the strides women have made in accessing higher levels of education and certification." Her recommendations included a need for more in-depth study of the factors affecting women's access to political office, the establishment of female caucuses within Parliaments and across the sub-region, the use of quota systems, such as Guyana's, setting a minimum target of 33% female candidates on electoral lists, making gender equality, both in and out of Parliament, part of the agenda of female Parliamentarians, and encouraging parliamentarians to include a gender perspective in all legislation rather than treating it as a discrete issue.

3.2 National Experiences

Following the presentation by Mrs. Pargass, personal and national experiences on the question of Women in Power and Decision-Making were presented by representatives from Grenada and St. Lucia.



Grenada

The Honourable Leslie Ann Seon, President of the Senate of Grenada explained that she is the second woman to hold the position of President of the Senate in Grenada and noted that, among Caribbean countries, Grenada has the highest representation of women in parliament without the use of a quota system. Despite this, however, she recalled her misgivings at accepting the position of President, noting the challenge of balancing family and political life and the negative perception that many women hold of the integrity of politicians. President Seon acknowledged these challenges but emphasized her commitment to making ethics the foundation of her work in parliament and called on parliamentarians to keep gender on the agenda in each of their countries.

St. Lucia

The Honourable Joseph Baden Allain, Speaker of the House of Assembly of St. Lucia talked about the increasing influence of women in politics in St. Lucia, tracing the growing involvement of women in the professions and applauding the work of his female counterparts, such as Senator Harracksingh who also participated in the meeting. Speaker Allain emphasized that, beyond parliament, there are many fields through which to influence politics, including law, medicine, religion and commerce, and, based on their increasingly involvement in these areas, he predicted a bright future for St. Lucian women in parliament.



3.3 Recommendations

The presentations were followed by a period of discussion, which resulted in the following recommendations:

Participants in FIPA's First Regional Forum recommend that parliamentarians:

1. Actively engage, mentor and encourage other women in order to create a greater interest in politics.
2. Support and encourage women interested in and/or participating in politics under the current system by:
 - a. Creating a tighter local and regional network of female politicians to
 - Communicate and exchange ideas, strategies and tactics for political elevation and;
 - Utilize the knowledge and assistance of other senior female parliamentarians in strengthening our involvement in politics.
 - b. Creating stronger connections between women parliamentarians and community and/or gender interest groups in order to create support structures for women parliamentarians to provide assistance for them to
 - Work within the constituency, by providing strong support for the prospective candidate and;
 - Give tangible financial, emotional and physical support to females in the political process.
3. Change the system to make it more woman-friendly by:
 - a. Adopting the principles of consensus and team building and;
 - b. Developing a more nurturing and accommodating environment so that we motivate more women to become involved in the political process.

4. Second Session: Women, Poverty and HIV/AIDS

4.1 Expert Presentation - The Role of Legislators in Advancing the HIV/AIDS Regional Strategy



Mrs. Nalita Gajadhar, Program Officer for the Bureau of Gender Affairs, Barbados, and Past-President of the National Organization of Women made a presentation about the Role of Legislators in Advancing the HIV/AIDS Regional Strategy, emphasizing the connection between gender and HIV/AIDS, and reminding parliamentarians that “when we talk about gender ... we’re talking about the relationship between men and women and how that

relationship makes us vulnerable, makes us powerful and makes us weak.”

Mrs. Gajadhar explained how biology, poverty, education and migration interact with gender identity to affect our vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. For Mrs. Gajadhar the fight against HIV/AIDS must include a gender perspective, as the societal norms assigned to male and female gender identities greatly impact our vulnerability to this very dangerous disease. Mrs. Gajadhar explained that the role of women as primary caregiver, combined with high levels of poverty and the resulting reliance on male assistance reduces the ability of women to control their sexual relations, even with husbands, leaving them vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. She further explained that the socialisation of men in the Caribbean, which leads to the acceptance and even encouragement of promiscuous behaviour, also increases their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS.

Mrs. Gajadhar encouraged parliamentarians to work for a more universal inclusion of gender perspective in parliamentary affairs, and called for increased use of gender mainstreaming policies. She left parliamentarians with a call for action and a chilling prediction that without change “50 years from now my daughter might be sitting here, in the same boat, having the same discussion, except that we will have a much reduced population.”

4.2 National Experiences

Following the presentation by Mrs. Gajadhar, national experiences of Barbados and Canada were presented on the question of Women, Poverty and HIV/AIDS.

Barbados

The Honourable Hamilton Lashley, Minister for Social Transformation and Gender Affairs in Barbados, spoke on the issue of poverty, connecting it to women and the problem of HIV and AIDS. Minister Lashley explained that, despite the many advances of developing countries in recent years, the gap between rich and poor continues to widen. Minister Lashley emphasized the connections between poverty and gender, noting that a large percentage of poor, single parent and/or extended family households are headed by women, and explained the inverse connection between education and poverty and the positive connection between poverty and HIV/AIDS. Calling poverty an “offence to human dignity” Minister Lashley called for parliamentarians to address these linkages through innovative policies, such as the Big Sister program in Barbados, which transmits information about women and HIV/AIDS through the media and more traditional policies, such as the gender mainstreaming and sensitization programs offered by the Barbados Bureau of Gender Affairs.



Canada

The Honourable Pana Merchant, Senator of Canada, attributed the success of Canada in coping with HIV/AIDS to the fact that, in her country, “the rights and dignities of people living with or vulnerable to HIV are recognized, respected, and promoted...People living with and vulnerable to HIV are partners in shaping the policies and programs that affect their lives.... They have access to high quality effective services that meet their needs.” While Senator Merchant lamented the increase in women affected by the disease and the devastating impact the epidemic will have on Canada’s indigenous communities, she applauded HIV/AIDS



awareness initiatives in Canada and emphasized the importance of Bill C9, which makes Canada the first country to introduce legislation giving developing countries access to lower cost generic versions of pharmaceutical products under patent in Canada. According to Senator Merchant Bill C-9 and Canada's increased funding for HIV/AIDS initiatives demonstrate awareness that, in order to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic we must "focus on the broad health, social and economic needs of those most vulnerable to HIV, and reduce the economic and social inequalities that threaten people's health, both in Canada and internationally."

4.3 Recommendations

The presentations were followed by a period of discussion, which resulted in the following recommendations:

Recognizing that:

- Working for greater gender equity is an important part of addressing the issue of Women, Poverty and HIV/AIDS;
- Poverty eradication as integral part of the fight against HIV/AIDS
- Education is a critical weapon in the fight against HIV/AIDS, that part of that education is the social construct of how we define what is male and what is female, and that the current social construct actually promotes exposure to HIV/AIDS;

Participants in FIPA's First Regional Forum recommend that parliamentarians:

1. Work to strengthen the sense of gender equity in the society.
2. Change legislation to strengthen gender equity by:
 - a. Making a list of discriminatory legislation against women and;
 - b. Putting in place legislation that strengthens gender equity, such as:
 - Legislation protecting women against rape (in countries where it is not considered rape if a woman is forced into sexual relations by her husband) and;
 - Legislation governing gender policy and how education moneys are spent, so that the programming that takes place is gender sensitive.
3. As the current party system limits parliamentarians to liaising only with others in their party, parliamentarians must mobilize across party lines and reach out to other women and men concerned about this issue in order to create stronger and wider connections and mobilize a greater number of people to deal with this very serious problem.

5. Third Session: *Human Rights of Women & Violence against Women*

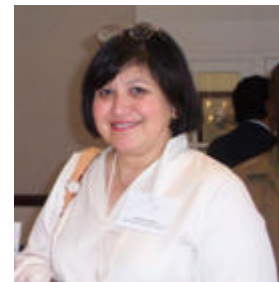
5.1 Expert Presentation - *Ratification and Implementation of International and Regional Agreements on Women's Human Rights*



Mrs. Carmen Lomellin, Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) of the Organization of American States (OAS), talked about international and regional agreements on women's human rights and the work of CIM - the oldest regional organization dedicated to improving the status of women in the Western Hemisphere. The presentation focussed on gender-based violence, trafficking of women and children, and women's role in situations of conflict.

According to Mrs. Lomellin, the *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women*, known as *the Convention of Belém Do Pará*, drafted in 1994 and since ratified by 31 of the 34 countries in the OAS, indicates a strong commitment by people of the Americas to address the issue of violence against women. However, Mrs. Lomellin lamented that much work has yet to be done to eliminate the problem, noting that no significant means of following up on the Convention of Belém do Pará was originally established and explaining that CIM's mandate includes coordinating a follow up process for the Convention.

Mrs. Lomellin also addressed the lack of awareness surrounding the trafficking of women and children in the Americas, noting that though "many government officials sincerely believe that the trafficking of human beings is not a problem in our hemisphere... Research has proven that this is indeed a serious problem" Increased understanding of the situation has put trafficking on the agenda for Ministers of Justice meeting later this year, and for an upcoming conference of national authorities on the subject. It has also led to the creation of an Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, based at CIM, who will support the work of OAS Member States in this area.



Mrs. Lomellin also noted that the perspectives and concerns of women have generally been excluded from peace and reconstruction processes. However, the establishment of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which mandates the full participation of women in all peace reconstructions processes, enables CIM to advocate for the inclusion of a gender perspective in matters related to peace and security in the Americas through projects such as their training programs for stakeholders in peace and reconstruction processes.

Finally, Mrs. Lomellin quoted Rosario Green, the former Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico pointed out recently, in saying "it is fundamental to believe in women's capacity to solve at the national level the problems that they tackle daily at the personal level in their domestic lives," and left parliamentarians with a reminder that it is their responsibility to



“create the climate, the programs, and the policies that will help women to help themselves and their families.”

5.2 National Experiences

Following the presentation by Mrs. Lomellin personal and national experiences on the question of Human Rights of Women and Violence against Women were presented by representatives of Antigua and Barbuda, Mexico, and St. Kitts and Nevis.

Antigua and Barbuda



The Honourable Dr. Jacqui Quinn-Leandro, Minister of Labour, Public Administration and Empowerment, reviewed major law reforms in Antigua and Barbuda aimed at protecting the rights of women against violence. Some recent advances include changes made to the Sexual Offences Act in 1995 and 2000, which increased the penalty for rape and sexual assault, and the amendments made to the Labour Code ensuring paid maternity leave each time a woman has a child. Minister Quinn-Leandro also applauded the ratification in 2005 of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish the Trafficking of Women and Children; however, she noted that on some issues such as marital rape, more work remains to be done.

Declaring that “denying women their human rights is no different from racism,” Minister Quinn-Leandro called for parliamentarians to take an integrated approach in dealing with gender violence, saying that women parliamentarians have a responsibility, a right, and a challenge to speak up and speak out on the issue of women and violence.

Mexico

Diputada Blanca Gámez Gutiérrez of the Mexican Chamber of Deputies reviewed the *Special Commission to Study and Review the Investigation of Murders Perpetrated against Women and Promote Justice for Victims of Femicide*. Providing an overview of the Commission’s findings Diputada Gámez explained that, in Ciudad Juárez, near the US border, violence is severe and often directed at women. She referred to such violence as femicide, which she defined as “the sum total of the various forms of violence against women due to their gender, class, ethnicity, age, ideology and politics; factors which ‘come together and reinforce one another in a particular period and location, culminating in a series of violent deaths...’,” explaining that these crimes share “the attitude that women are expendable,” and occur when “the State provides no guarantees for women and fails to create the conditions to safeguard their lives...”

Providing disturbing statistics and examples of femicide Diputada Gámez criticized the lack of professionalism displayed by authorities in tracking statistics and convicting perpetrators, and called for greater efficiency in tackling the problem. Despite recent advances, such as the creation of a Comprehensive Public Security Plan and a Special Prosecutor for Investigation of Crimes relating to the Murder of Female Victims in the Municipality of Ciudad Juárez, Diputada Gámez condemned the high levels of impunity and irregular sentencing and emphasized the importance of working “for the life, rights and freedom of women everywhere.”

St. Kitts and Nevis

The Honourable Marcella Liburd, Speaker of the House of Assembly of St. Kitts and Nevis reviewed some of the legislative and policy measures taken in response to violence against women in St. Kitts and Nevis, including the St. Kitts and Nevis Constitution, the Domestic Violence Act of 2000, the Equal Opportunity and Treatment and Employment Act of 2003 and the Protection Against Sexual Harassment Act, also initiated in 2003. Though not all of these acts have been approved, Speaker Liburd commended the government's efforts and noted that a legal aid clinic is also being established to enable women to take advantage of legislation created for their protection.



Speaker Liburd also emphasized that we “must not limit discussion of violence against women to the most obvious definitions of violence. Some of the most brutal and life altering forms of violence can be absolutely non-physical. It can be emotional, psychological or at times even spiritual.” Speaker Liburd cited examples such as the “lascivious promiscuity and sociopathic behaviour” promoted by international media, the threat to small and medium sized entrepreneurs caused by large corporations and the vulnerability of the Caribbean economies caused by international trade agreements and regulations. Recognizing the advances made in such areas as health care and education Speaker Liburd lamented the low percentage of women in parliament and called for women to take the lead in creating change.

5.3 Recommendations

The presentations were followed by a period of discussion, which resulted in the following recommendations:

Recognizing that:

- Women Parliamentarians must lead the change in regard to ensuring that legislation addresses the Human Rights of Women and Violence against Women,

Participants in FIPA's First Regional Forum recommend that parliamentarians:

1. Strengthen legislation dealing with domestic violence by:
 - a. Reviewing legislation to determine where improvements can be made and;
 - b. Reforming existing legislation where necessary (ie: review the criminal code in order to ensure that unacceptable actions are defined as illegal).
2. Ensure that governments enter into and honour commitment to international conventions in the interest of gender rights and equality, such as the Millennium development goals, Beijing Platform Plan of Action, etc...
3. Identify an individual or expert to monitor each of the conventions (make sure that everything that has been codified, internationally accepted and is part of the local government agenda is monitored by a group or expert that would report regularly about the implementation of the conventions).



6. Fourth Session: *Enhancing Women's Leadership for the XXI Century*

6.1 Presentations

The second day of the Forum was open to Civil Society Representatives and Business Leaders. Senator Sandra Husbands, host of the event and President of the Caribbean Association of Small and Medium Enterprises, Mrs. Christiane Bergevin, President of SNC-Lavalin Capital Inc, and the Honourable Alix Boyd-Knights, Speaker of the House of Assembly of Dominica, presented 3 perspectives on Enhancing Women's Leadership for the XXI Century.

Enhancing Women's Political Leadership

Speaker Alix Boyd-Knights, Dominica



In her presentation Speaker Boyd-Knights called into question democracies in which the female half of the population is not fully included in the democratic process, noting that, an increase in educated women has not resulted in a corresponding increase in women in parliament. For Speaker Boyd-Knights the burden of changing this situation lies with those participants present at the meeting, and she emphasized the need to be pro-active and practical and to

persevere in empowering and encouraging the women of the region to become involved in politics by working to see more women brought into political parties, dispensing with the "Women's Arm" party structure, developing strategies to reach more women and highlighting the success' of those women already involved in politics.

Enhancing Women's Business Leadership

Senator Sandra Husbands, Barbados

As President of the Caribbean Association of Small and Medium Enterprises Senator Sandra Husbands recognized the potential benefits of trade liberalization, but warned that, by following a neo-liberal path countries risk losing the gains made over recent years in areas such as health care, education and social security. The Senator called on women in parliament and business to ensure trade liberalization is implemented "in a way that makes sense for each individual country," and cautioned that the process would require significant change on the part of both businesses and individuals, as it would be necessary to "re-tool" in order to meet the challenges of a new economic system. Senator Husbands acknowledged that this could be difficult for women due to family responsibilities and encouraged women to question the system, which was created by and for men, rather than simply endeavoring to fit themselves into it.

Mrs. Christiane Bergevin, Canada

Finally, Christiane Bergevin, President of SNC-Lavalin Capital Inc., a division of the largest engineering firm in Canada, shared some insight into what is needed if we are to see more women holding prominent positions in the finance sector. Mrs. Bergevin noted

that lack of education or lack of experience, and heavy family responsibilities are not the only reasons for women's low participation, as 50% of business school graduates are currently women, and women have been working in the finance world for sometime now, often in companies with policies that allow for significant family time.

Despite the involvement of women in the softer areas of the finance sector, Mrs. Bergevin acknowledged that it is still rare to find women in the power sectors or in the top positions of the business sector, and used a sports metaphor to question the efficiency of a team in which half of the best players are not allowed to play. Referring to a recent study Mrs. Bergevin noted the poor self confidence and self promotion skills displayed by women and called for women to spend more time spent net-working and selling their achievements. Mrs. Bergevin emphasized the importance of working with male counterparts to find flexible and innovative ways to balance family and work, noting the success of SNC-Lavalin based on a policy of including the whole team in working to find innovative ways of doing business.



6.2 Recommendations

The presentations were followed by simultaneous round table discussions, in which parliamentarians joined with members of civil society and the business community to discuss enhancing women's leadership in politics and entrepreneurship. The discussions resulted in the following conclusions and recommendations:

Participants in FIPA's First Regional Forum recommend the following:

1. **Identify and encourage young people** to become involved in politics by:
 - Establishing primary school initiatives such as the creation of political clubs which can be feeder mechanisms for National Youth Parliaments;
 - Creating mentorship programs to expose interested young women to politics and political life;
 - Identifying young leaders through programs such as the Junior Achievement awards offered in Canada.
2. **Identify and encourage women** of all ages to become involved in politics by:
 - Encouraging, recognizing and connecting with women already involved in their communities;
 - Promoting the idea that women of all ages and at all stages of life can participate in the political process;



- Working to register more women to vote;
- Assisting women candidates by joining their support team;
 - Highlighting the achievements and advice of successful women in politics so as to inspire other women to become involved;
 - Supporting and/or creating media outlets to market and promote women (FIPA's Virtual Parliament or the UNIFEM/UNDP website <http://cfcportal.net> could be valuable tools for this);
 - Creating affirmative action legislation such as that already used in some countries in order to guarantee that neither gender holds more than 70% of the representative or elected positions at any given time.



3. **Develop networks** to provide support systems for women by:

- Creating regular forums and conventions, such as the FIPA Women's Group Forums, to bring together parliamentarians; women involved in their communities and women with leadership experience;
- Using the internet (such as the FIPA Virtual Parliament) to connect women;
- Connecting with existing women's groups and soliciting their support for women candidates and/or parliamentarians;
- Including men who support women in the networks.
- Providing support systems for political candidates by working with support teams, local women's groups, volunteers, etc...;
- Creating a network of women involved in diverse business interests and/or careers and actively promoting and supporting them.

4. **Offer practical training and financial support** to women interested in running for politics by:

- Distributing 'how to' information for women on campaign funding, including payment of nomination fees, networking with women in different sections (ie: corporate), team building skills and likely sources of funding;
- Creating a campaign fund or endowment for women interested in participating in parliament;
- Training women to market themselves (ie: how to present themselves and their achievements, how to build confidence, how to coordinate their support teams, how to tap into available resources, etc... through mentorship or other programs).

5. **Create family friendly work environments** by:

- Creating more versatile work policies such as flexible work days and hours, opportunities to work from home, more lenience for family responsibilities, etc...;

- Educating society to accept versatile policies and creating mechanisms to ensure productivity, honesty (fair days/fair pay), accountability, etc... are maintained;

6. Challenge and change perceptions of gender identities and roles through:

- Aggressive public relations campaigns and increased discussion, beginning at the primary school level and continuing throughout society;
- Celebrating a national and/or international women's day in order to highlight women's achievements;
- Celebrating men who support their partners in household responsibilities and/or careers so as to create role models for more equitable divisions of labour;
- Bearing in mind cultural and regional peculiarities when creating strategies to encourage a view of women as valuable contributors to society;
- Creating family environments that are more work friendly by encouraging men to share household responsibilities, emphasizing that both men and women play important roles in raising the family;
- Challenging the North American/European ideal of the nuclear family, which negates the value of the extended family and, establishing family and friend networks to provide critical support to family life where challenges of work negate "quality of life";



* * *



Parliamentarians Participating in the First Regional Forum of FIPA's Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas



Parliamentarians and Private Sector Members Participating in the First Regional Forum of FIPA's Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas

7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1 – Countries and Delegates Present

Parliamentary Participants

<p>Antigua and Barbuda Dr. Jacqui Quinn-Leandro, MP Senator Joanne Massiah</p>	<p>Jamaica Mrs. Verna Parchment, MP</p>
<p>Barbados Senator Sandra Husbands Mr. Hamilton Lashley, MP</p>	<p>Mexico Dip. Blanca Gámez Gutiérrez Dip. Rogelio Alejandro Flores Mejía Dip. Luis Espinoza Perez</p>
<p>Canada Senator Céline Hervieux-Payette (FIPA President) Senator Ethel Cochrane Senator Pana Merchant</p>	<p>St. Lucia Mr. Joseph Baden Allain, MP (Speaker of Parliament) Senator Lelia Harracksingh</p>
<p>Dominica Mrs. Alix Boyd Knights, MP (Speaker of the House of Assembly)</p>	<p>St. Kitts and Nevis Mrs. Marcela Liburd, MP (Speaker of the National Assembly)</p>
<p>Grenada Senator Leslie Ann Seon (President of the Senate) Senator Ingrid Rush Mrs. Glynis Roberts, MP</p>	<p>Trinidad and Tobago Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, MP Senator Joan Yuille-Williams Mrs. Eudine Job-Davis, MP</p>
<p>Guyana Mrs. Genevieve Allen, MP</p>	

FIPA Secretariat

<p>Ms. Emmanuelle Pelletier Ms. Sabra Ripley</p>



Expert Participants

<p>Canada Caribbean Gender Program for Barbados and the OECS Mrs. Jeanette Bell, Coordinator</p>
<p>Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Port of Spain Mrs. Gaietry Pargass, Social Affairs Officer</p>
<p>Bureau of Gender Affairs, Barbados Mrs. Nalita Gajadhar, Program Officer</p>
<p>Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) Mrs. Carmen Lomellin, Executive Secretary</p>

Private Sector Participants

<p>Apostolic Teaching Centre Mrs. Betty Proute</p>										
<p>Barbados Post Office Mrs. Dorcas Scantlebury</p>										
<p>NJLT/COB Mrs. Sylvia Turto</p>										
<p>Royal Bank of Canada (RBC)</p> <table><tr><td>Mrs. Portia Blackman</td><td>Mrs. Colleen Jones</td></tr><tr><td>Mrs. Angela Callender</td><td>Mrs. Janice Luke</td></tr><tr><td>Mrs. Stephanie Clarke</td><td>Mrs. Heather Roberts</td></tr><tr><td>Mrs. Gail Gibbons</td><td>Mrs. Claire Waithe</td></tr><tr><td>Mrs. Maria Harewood</td><td>Mrs. Michelle Watson</td></tr></table>	Mrs. Portia Blackman	Mrs. Colleen Jones	Mrs. Angela Callender	Mrs. Janice Luke	Mrs. Stephanie Clarke	Mrs. Heather Roberts	Mrs. Gail Gibbons	Mrs. Claire Waithe	Mrs. Maria Harewood	Mrs. Michelle Watson
Mrs. Portia Blackman	Mrs. Colleen Jones									
Mrs. Angela Callender	Mrs. Janice Luke									
Mrs. Stephanie Clarke	Mrs. Heather Roberts									
Mrs. Gail Gibbons	Mrs. Claire Waithe									
Mrs. Maria Harewood	Mrs. Michelle Watson									
<p>SNC-Lavalin Capital Inc. Mrs. Christiane Bergevin</p>										

7.2 Appendix 2 – Program for the First Regional Forum of FIPA's Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas

Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas of FIPA

First Regional Forum (Caribbean & North America)

“Enhancing Women’s Leadership to Strengthen Democracy”

Bridgetown (Barbados), March 20-22, 2005

Objectives:

- To create a forum for women parliamentarians of the Americas to advance the regional gender-equality agenda, for shaping the direction and character of emerging societies of the 21st century
- 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

Contact Information

Barbados	International/Canada
<p>Conference Location: The Savannah Hotel, Hastings Conference Room Hastings, Christ Church, Barbados Tel: 1 (246) 228-3800 Fax: 1 (246) 228-4385 www.gemsofbarbados.com</p> <p>Lynette Holder, Barbados Coordinator Corporate Communications Consultants Tel: 1 (246) 434-0756 Fax: 1 (246) 434-0756 Email: cccinc@caribsurf.com</p>	<p>Sabra Ripley, International Coordinator Deputy Executive Secretary Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA) Tel: 1 (613) 943-2802 Fax: 1 (613) 947-8010 Email: info-fipa@e-fipa.org</p> <p>Emmanuelle Pelletier Executive Secretary Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA) Tel: 1 (613) 947-8787 Fax: 1 (613) 947-8010 Email: info-fipa@e-fipa.org</p>



Program
<p>Sunday, March 20, 2005: 7:30pm Welcoming Cocktail (Savannah Hotel, Courtyard)</p>
<p>Monday, March 21, 2005: 9:00am Registration of Participants</p>
<p>9:30am Opening Ceremony</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Honourable Sandra Husbands, Senator of Barbados, Member of the Executive Committee of FIPA ▪ The Honourable Céline Hervieux-Payette, Senator of Canada, President of FIPA ▪ The Honourable Elizabeth Thompson-McDowald, Minister of Housing and the Environment of Barbados <p>10:00-10:15am Introduction: <i>Moving forward on the Regional and International Agenda for Gender Equality.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mrs. Jeanette Bell, Coordinator for the Canada Caribbean Gender Program for Barbados and the OECS
<p>10:15-10:40am Coffee Break</p>
<p>First Session: <i>Women in Power and Decision-Making</i></p> <p>10:40-11:30am Presentations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 10:40-11:00am <i>Representation of Women in Parliaments of the Region: Recognition and Removal of Obstacles</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mrs. Gaietry Pargass, Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (ECLAC) ▪ 11:00-11:30am <i>National Experiences</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Honourable Leslie Ann Seon, President of the Senate, Grenada ○ The Honourable Joseph Baden Allain, Speaker of the House of Assembly, St. Lucia ○ Trinidad and Tobago <p>11:30am-12:30pm Discussion</p> <p>12:30-12:40pm Wrap-Up</p>
<p>12:40-2:00pm Lunch (Boucan Wine Bar and Restaurant, Savannah Hotel)</p>

Second Session: Women, Poverty and HIV/AIDS

2:20-3:10pm Presentations

- 2:20-2:40pm *The Role of Legislators in Advancing the HIV/AIDS Regional Strategy*
 - Mrs. Nalita Gajadhar, Program Officer for the Bureau of Gender Affairs, Barbados, and Past-President of the National Organization of Women
- 2:40-3:10pm *National Experiences*
 - The Honourable Hamilton Lashley, Minister for Social Transformation and Gender Affairs, Barbados
 - The Honourable Pana Merchant, Senator of Canada

3:10-4:10pm Discussion

4:10-4:20pm Wrap-Up

4:20-4:30pm Coffee Break

Third Session: Human Rights of Women & Violence Against Women

4:30-5:30pm Presentations

- 4:30-4:50pm *Ratification and Implementation of International and Regional Agreements on Women's Human Rights*
 - Mrs. Carmen Lomellin, Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM)
- 4:50-5:30pm *National Experiences*
 - The Honourable Dr. Jacqui Quinn-Leandro, Minister of Labour, Public Administration and Empowerment, Antigua and Barbuda
 - Diputada Blanca Gámez Gutiérrez, *Cámara de Diputados*, Mexico : «Femicide in Ciudad Juárez»
 - The Honourable Marcella Liburd, Speaker of the House of Assembly, St. Kitts and Nevis

5:30-6:30pm Discussion

6:30-6:40pm Wrap-Up

7:30pm Dinner Hosted by H.E. Michael C. Welsh

High Commissioner of Canada for Barbados

Location: Canadian High Commission in Barbados (Near the People's Cathedral)

Tuesday March 22, 2005:

Open to Civil Society Representatives and Business Leaders

9:00-9:30am Registration of Civil Society Organizations and Business Sector Representatives



Fourth Session: *Enhancing Women's Leadership for the XXI Century*

Open to Civil Society Representatives and Business Leaders

9:30-9:50am Presentations

- Senator Sandra Husbands, President of the Caribbean Association of Small and Medium Enterprises
- The Honourable Alix Boyd-Knights, Speaker of the House of Assembly, Dominica

9:50-10:00am Break

10:00-11:30am Simultaneous Round-Tables

- Enhancing Women's Leadership in Politics
- Enhancing Women's Entrepreneurship

11:30am-12:00pm Presentation of results and wrap-up of round table meeting

12:00pm-12:30pm Presentation of final conclusions and recommendations

12:30-2:00pm Lunch (Boucan Wine Bar and Restaurant)

2:00-2:30pm Press conference

FIPA's Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas would like to thank our Financial Sponsors:



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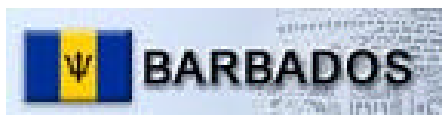


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**The Economic Commission for Latin America and
the Caribbean, United Nations - www.eclac.cl**



**The Inter-American Commission of Women at the
Organization of American States (OAS)**

www.oas.org/CIM/



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7.3 Appendix 3 – About FIPA’s Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas

History

At the 2002 FIPA Plenary Meeting, women parliamentarians participating in FIPA held a breakfast meeting to discuss their role in parliament and politics, as well as their role in FIPA. From this humble beginning the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, was created.

Composition

Headed by Argentinean Parliamentarian Margarita Stolbizer the group operates as a work group under the framework of FIPA and includes representatives from each of the sub-regions of the Americas (North, Central, South and Caribbean).

Objectives

As determined by the FIPA Plenary the group has as its general objectives:

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

Furthermore, the group works 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.

Parliamentarians interested in working with this group, which is open to both men and women, can contact the FIPA Secretariat at www.info-fipa@e-fipa.org or visit our website at www.e-fipa.org.

7.4 Appendix 4 – Opening Ceremony Speech

The Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette
Senator of Canada, President of FIPA

Original language: English

In November 2001 I had the opportunity, representing my country, to attend the second meeting of the Executive Committee of FIPA, held right here in Barbados. As one of the first meetings, it played a decisive role for the recently created FIPA, since it laid the foundation for our organization's work. But even more than the decisions made, two aspects of that meeting stand out for those who were there. The first is the enthusiasm with which our colleagues from Barbados welcomed FIPA's initiative and stressed the importance of Caribbean participation in this hemispheric initiative. The second is the warm hospitality of our hosts and the beauty of this marvelous Caribbean country. Therefore I am both pleased and honoured to be in Barbados again and I want to thank our colleagues, in particular Senator Sandra Husbands, for their kind invitation and for their efforts to organize this event.

The Women's Parliamentary Group of the Americas began as an initiative of the Argentinian parliamentarian Margarita Stolbizer to create a forum where issues on FIPA's agenda could be discussed from a gender perspective. It was officially made a permanent working group in a resolution of the Second Plenary Assembly of FIPA, held in Panama in February 2003. Last year, the group held its first formal meeting as part of the Plenary Assembly in Chile. It was there that the action plan which led to our meeting here today was prepared.

It think that it is important to mention that the idea behind this group is not to create a "women's club" to discuss "women's issues." On the contrary, this group is trying to promote women's active participation in the working meetings of FIPA, to strengthen women's political leadership through regional exchanges and to foster mechanisms to facilitate and encourage women's participation in politics, among other things. In other words, this group of women is not trying to isolate itself but is discussing how it can fit in.

The need to support and promote women's participation in politics is not an unfashionable topic. On the contrary, it takes on renewed importance in the present political context in the Americas, where the need to restore citizens' trust in democratic institutions has become obvious in several countries.

Although legislation promoting women's participation in public life is important, legislation alone cannot guarantee that there will be more women in politics. It is not enough to tell women that they can participate; they must be taught how to do it and, above all, the right conditions must be created for women to compete equally with their male counterparts.

I am sure that all of us here today are aware of the obstacles for women's professional development, and that in politics as well as business, a woman must be twice as good to excel in a man's world. But we also know that even more important than recognizing the problem is to develop concrete strategies for meeting the challenges that face us.



For this, I believe that in the next two days, this first regional forum of the Women's Parliamentary Group of the Americas must be a place where we discuss common strategies for solving the problems identified. Therefore I invite you to participate actively in all the working sessions, to talk with the invited panellists and, above all, to share any idea or initiative that you consider important for reaching the stated objectives. That is why we are here: to dialogue, to benefit from our colleagues' experiences and to work together, because we can do more collectively than individually.

Finally, I want to thank everyone here for taking part, especially you, Minister Mottley. Your presence here today is recognition for the work of this organization and a clear indication that we are on the right track.

Thank you very much.

NB: Please note that the text from the speeches by Senator Sandra Husbands and the Honourable Elizabeth Thompson-McDowald is unfortunately unavailable.

7.5 Appendix 5 - Reference Material Recommended by Jeanette Bell

Mrs. Jeanette Bell

Coordinator for the Canadian Caribbean Gender Program for Barbados and OECS
Moving forward on the Regional and International Agenda for Gender Equality

Original Language: English

Women in the Caribbean

1. Ellis, Patricia, ed. *Women of the Caribbean*. London: Zed Books ltd., 1986. (Dated but useful background information)
2. Ellis, Patricia. *Women, Gender and Development in the Caribbean: Reflections and Projections*. London, New York, Jamaica: Zed Books, 2003.
3. Tang Nain, Gemma & Barbara Bailey, eds. *Gender Equality in the Caribbean: Reality or Illusion*. Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2003. (Written for the CARICOM Secretariat)
4. Brasileiro, Ana Maria, ed. *Women's Leadership in a Changing World: Reflecting on Experience in Latin America and the Caribbean*. New York City, New York: United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), 1996.
5. Brasileiro, Ana Maria, ed. *Building Democracy with Women, Reflection on Experiences in Latin American and the Caribbean*. New York City, New York: United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), 1996.
6. CPDC. *The Caribbean Beacon – Vote More Women in to Parliament*. The Caribbean Policy Development Centre, 2004 Edition. (Tel: 246-437-6055, Fax: 246-437-3381, www.cpdngo.org)
7. *Gender Equality, Social Justice and Development: The CARICOM Post-Beijing Regional Plan of Action – Year 2000*. CARICOM Secretariat Publication, 1997.

United Nations Materials

1. UN. *Platform for Action – Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, 1995*. [Online www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/index.html]
2. UN. *Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) signed December 18th, 1979, entry into force September 3rd (entry into force 1981)* [Online www.ohchr.org/english/law/cedaw.htm]
3. UN. *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women*. [Online www.ohchr.org/english/law/cedaw-one.htm]
4. UN. *Programme of Action - Adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 1994*. [Online www.iisd.ca/Cairo/program/p00000.html]
5. UN. *Key Actions for the further Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, 1999*. [Online www.un.org/popin/unpopcom/32ndsess/gass.htm#as215a1]
6. OAS. *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Belém do Para), 1994 (entry into force 1995)* [Online www.oas.org/juridico/english/Treaties/a-61.htm]



7.6 Appendix 6 – Recommendations by Mrs. Gaietry Pargass

Mrs. Gaietry Pargass

Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
Representation of Women in Parliaments of the Region: Recognition and Removal of Obstacles

Original Language: English

Recommendations

- i. There is a need for more in-depth study of the factors which affect women's access to political office. Through this research process, a common regional agenda/regional programme of action should be developed. National agendas/programmes of action should be developed to deal with specific needs of individual countries.
- ii. Female Parliamentarians should facilitate the establishment of female caucuses within their respective Parliaments as well as across the sub-region. Such caucuses should forge linkages with the national women's machineries, women's organizations and with civil society and should have as their primary focus an agenda for providing support for women's participation in the political process.
- iii. Following the Guyanese model and as an initial step, countries should adopt legislation or policy which sets a minimum target of 33 percent for female candidates on electoral lists. The aim should be to reach 50 percent within a specific time frame.
- iv. It is important that the gender equality agenda become part of the agenda of female Parliamentarians both within the Parliament and outside of the Parliament. Gender training for female parliamentarians is important in this regard and males should be co-opted in the process.
- v. The national women's machineries and women's organisations should seek to collaborate closely and to redefine their agendas to project the interconnectedness of gender equality issues even where they are not working on those issues. One of the primary reasons for the slow progress made in the area of women and power and decision-making is that it is treated as a discrete issue.

* * *

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