



*Political Leadership  
of Women:  
Action Plan for the Americas*

*Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic  
June 30th and July 1st, 2011*



**Group of Women Parliamentarians of The Americas  
Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas – FIPA**









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of Women:  
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Foro Interparlamentario de las Américas  
Forum Interparlamentar das Américas



Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas  
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GRUPO PARLAMENTARIO  
POR LOS DERECHOS  
DE LAS MUJERES  
E C U A D O R



CÁMARA DE DIPUTADOS  
REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA



Linda Machuca Moscoso  
PRESIDENT OF THE GROUP OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS  
OF THE AMERICAS - FIPA

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Disclaimer:

This document contains the presentations of women speakers and summarizes the criteria of the participating parliamentarians, as well as of the observers to the meeting. However, it does not necessarily reflect the views of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas – FIPA.

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*Official photo of the Meeting  
“Leadership and Political Empowerment of Women:  
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30th June 2011, Hall of the Chamber of Deputies.*





## I. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank all those institutions that contributed to the organization of the workshop **“The Political Leadership of Women: Action Plan for the Americas”**, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), UN Women’s headquarters in Ecuador, Dominican Republic, and Haiti; the Chamber of Deputies of the Dominican Republic, the Parliamentary Group on Women’s Rights – National Assembly, Ecuador; the Ministry of Tourism of the Dominican Republic, the United Nations Development Programme UNDP –Dominican Republic, the Embassy of Ecuador in the Dominican Republic, and Banco Promérica also in the Dominican Republic.

Our thanks also go to the FIPA team made up of Eufemia Sánchez, Viviane Rossini, Gina Hill, and Stella García. We wish to thank FIPA’s Chair Member of Parliament Randy Hoback, Canada, and his team, for the support offered through the video message.

Likewise, we want to highlight the work of the Ecuador team – Assembly Member Linda Machuca, President of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, Santiago Argüello, and Belén Parra. And finally, we are grateful for the support provided by the officials of the Chamber of Deputies of the Dominican Republic, Silvana Romero and Olivia Betancourt, and their work teams.

## II. INSTITUTIONAL PRESENTATION

The **Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA)**, which as of September 2011 will change its name to **ParlAmericas**, is an independent network made up of the national legislatures of 35 member countries of the Organization of American States (OAS).

FIPA-**ParlAmericas** members are committed to promoting parliamentary participation in the inter-American system and to contributing to Interparliamentary dialogue in dealing with matters on the hemispheric agenda. Thus, FIPA-**ParlAmericas** encourages the exchange of experiences and best practices, strengthens the role of parliaments in the development of democracy, and promotes the harmonization of legislation and hemispheric integration as instruments for sustainable and harmonious development in the region.

**FIPA** was constituted in 2001 at the Inaugural Meeting hosted by the Parliament of Canada in Ottawa. At this meeting, parliamentarians from 26 countries of the hemisphere discussed organizational matters and adopted procedures for the functioning of FIPA. In addition, they discussed subjects of concern to parliamentarians and approved several recommendations, which were submitted to the Heads of Government at the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City.

During FIPA plenary assemblies, the parliamentarians of the Americas discuss issues of hemispheric relevance such as the role of women in parliament, the role of legislators in enhancing regional security, the challenges and opportunities for hemispheric integration, and regional economic development.



**FIPA's objectives, which will be furthered through ParlAmericas, are:**

- To contribute to the development of inter-parliamentary dialogue in dealing with issues on the hemispheric agenda.
- To increase the sharing of experiences, dialogue, and inter-parliamentary cooperation on issues of common interest to the member states.
- To help strengthen the role of the legislative branch in democracy, and in the promotion and defence of democracy and human rights.
- To promote the harmonization of legislation and development of legislation among member states.
- To contribute to the process of integration as one of the most appropriate instruments for sustainable and harmonious development in the hemisphere.

These objectives are included within the project *Strengthening the role of Parliaments in democratic governance and sustainable development in the Americas*, funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), whose contribution is key to the institutional strengthening of FIPA-ParlAmericas.

Every year the Plenary Assembly elects the president of the meeting and establishes the Working Groups. To this end, a series of groups have been created focused on issues of particular relevance or urgency for the hemisphere. Precisely in view of its significance, the *Group of Women Parliamentarians* has been set up on a permanent basis. This Group has hosted the workshop **“The Political Leadership of Women: Action Plan for the Americas”** and has issued this publication, under the current presidency of Assembly Member Linda Machuca of Ecuador.

## GROUP OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

The Group of Women Parliamentarians has been meeting at regular intervals since 2003. These meetings may take the form of training workshops or seminars.

After assuming the presidency of the Group of Women Parliamentarians in November 2009, during the Fifth Plenary Meeting of FIPA in Ottawa, Assembly Member Linda Machuca Moscoso of Ecuador has organized two international events for the 35 member countries, in addition to creating other work platforms and future projects to be developed by the women parliamentarians. The first workshop “Women in Power: Major Challenges for the 21st Century”, held in the city of Quito on August 12-13, 2010, was attended by 44 women parliamentarians from 17 different countries of the Americas.

Since 2011, the meetings of the Group of Women Parliamentarians have been focused on training. The workshop held on June 30th and July 1st, 2011 titled “**The Political Leadership of Women: Action Plan for the Americas**”, was planned at the 24th Meeting of the FIPA Executive Committee held at Curitiba, Brazil (February 2011). Based on Quito’s conclusions, it was proposed that the Group’s meetings should no longer be just as an annual event but an occasion to enhance the participants’ skills and should, as far as possible, be held in a Caribbean country.

The Group decided to work in the Caribbean for two major reasons: to promote the continuous integration of parliamentarians from the Caribbean islands into the work of the Group of Women Parliamentarians and of FIPA, and additionally to cooperate in a symbolic but representative way with the reconstruction of Haiti. To this end, a decision was made to move the meeting of the Group of Women Parliamentarians to the Dominican Republic, where the workshop “**The Political Leadership of Women: Action Plan for the**



**Americas”** was hosted. The event was a success from a qualitative and quantitative point of view.

The event brought together nearly 80 women parliamentarians and some men parliamentarians from 14 countries. The full participation of the Haitian women parliamentarians and of nearly all the women deputies of the host country is worth underlining. There were also some men parliamentarians present who recognized that working in favour of women is not only a woman’s task but a joint effort.

The success of the event was also reflected by the 9 high quality speakers from 7 different countries. These academicians and politicians, who are well aware of the current situation of the women politicians in the hemisphere, shared their experience and expertise with the parliamentarians, which created an opportunity for exchanging ideas during the animated debates that followed the presentations. Many women parliamentarians have expressed their high satisfaction with the event verbally and in writing.

Thus, **“The Political Leadership of Women: Action Plan for the Americas”**, has been an important discussion forum bringing together nearly 100 men and women –member of parliaments, women experts, and men and women observers– from different countries of the Americas, and offering an opportunity to discuss key issues such as women’s leadership and empowerment in politics; migration and afro-descendants; the challenges of the democratic system to ensure gender equality in political participation, and the situation of female politicians in the Caribbean.

All these topics were approached from different angles, but were always focused on the search for real equality. According to the speakers’ statements, in order to attain this equality in politics, a first step is to defeat the over representation of men in Parliament, assume that the gender perspective is an inescapable exercise in responsibility, and encourage governance reforms that will make all elected officials more effective

at promoting gender equality. Moreover, we should not lose sight of the assistance to women who account for fifty percent of the electorate.

Also regarding politics, the discussions on equality were focused on the search for a plural intercultural democracy, acknowledging the other, and transformations aimed at the redistribution of power and wealth. It was also proposed that the idea of equality should be complemented with the idea of democracy because power is not enough to eliminate gender-based discrimination. Likewise, it is not enough to have female representation because the quality of such representation should be valued. It is not always how much but how, as the very presence of women in politics does not help improve the lives of their equals.

From an economic perspective, legislative actions should be aimed at achieving the ideal of women's economic empowerment in order to attain equal pay for both men and women. From a theoretical viewpoint, it is necessary to rethink the meaning of real equality and its actual impact. The Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas is pleased to present to the readers the following report that summarizes the presentations of the women academicians and politicians participating in this event and offers an idea of the discussions arising from the debates, which were enriched by the contributions of the parliamentarians who shared their experiences and thoughts.

In addition to the summary of presentations, two appendices are included at the end regarding the discussions and ideas shared between the participants to the meeting. The first appendix relates to the Action Plan, which was drafted by all the men and women parliamentarians and is focused on 4 main work areas: Political Agenda, Legislative Agenda, Training Agenda, and Communication Agenda. The second document includes a manifesto produced after listening to the presentations by the Haitian



parliamentarians during the Round Table “The Haitian experience in the recent elections: The case of women politicians”.

Below is the work agenda used during the sessions on June 30th and July 1st, 2011, which is followed by the summary of the speakers’ presentations.

### III. EVENT AGENDA

#### Thursday, June 30

8h00	Meeting in the lobby of the hotel and transfer to the seat of the Chamber of Deputies
8h30 - 9h00	Registration of participants in the entrance of the National Assembly
9h00 - 10h00	<b>Opening Ceremony</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Welcome from Dr. Abel Martínez President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Dominican Republic</li><li>2. Greetings from M.P. Randy Hoback President of FIPA and Member of Parliament of Canada</li><li>3. Greetings from Magda Rodríguez President of the Gender and Equity Permanent Commission and Member of the Chamber of Deputies of the Dominican Republic</li><li>4. Opening by Linda Machuca Member of the National Assembly of Ecuador and Chair of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas - FIPA</li></ol>
10h00 - 10h30	Coffee Break
10h30 - 11h00	<b>PANEL 1 - LEADERSHIP AND POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT</b> <b>Presentation 1</b> - “An agenda to position ourselves as women politicians”. <b>Dr. Minou Josefina Tavárez Mirabal</b> Member of the Chamber of Deputies of the Dominican Republic
11h00 - 11h30	<b>Presentation 2</b> - “Women’s economic empowerment and the role of Parliamentarians”. <b>Dr. Almas Jiwani</b> President of the National Committee of UN Women Canada



*Panel moderator: Mónica Zalaquett  
Deputy of Chile*

11h30 - 12h30 Discussion  
12h30 - 13h30 Return to the hotel and lunch

*Hotel Intercontinental V Centenario - Salón Gran Caribe*  
14h00 - 14h30 **PANEL 2 – LEADERSHIP AND POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT  
(Second part)**

**Presentation 3** - “The advance of women’s political leadership and rights in the face of poor access to real equality. Where is the autonomy? A view from the south “.

**Liz Meléndez**

National Coordinator of CLADEM  
Peruvian Flora Tristan Women’s Centre - Peru

14h30 - 15h00 **Presentation 4** – “Building power: a Woman Politician’s point of view ”

**Dr. Milagros Ortiz Bosch**

Former Vice President of the Dominican Republic,  
Secretary of State for Education, Professor at  
Pedro Henríquez Ureña University, and Lawyer

*Panel moderator: Norma Esparza  
Senator of Mexico*

15h00 - 16h30 Discussion  
16h30 - 17h00 Coffee Break

17h00 - 17h30 **Presentation 5** - “Challenges of the women’s agenda:  
from decreed rights to exercised rights, through political action”

**Lourdes Contreras**

Executive Director of the Center of Gender Studies –  
INTEC University Dominican Republic

- 17h30 - 18h00 **PANEL 3 – MIGRATION AND AFRO-DESCENDANTS**  
**Presentation 5** – “Care and migration: a strategic area of intervention for the development of, and equality in the region”  
**Mar García**  
Program Coordinator - UN Women of the Dominican Republic  
Panel moderator: Linda Machuca  
Member of the National Assembly of Ecuador
- 18h00 - 19h30 Discussion
- 20h30 Welcome Dinner  
Intercontinental Hotel V Centenario - Santa María Hall  
Folkloric Ballet – Vice Ministry of Tourism  
Trío de Trovadores

**Friday, July 1**

- 08h30 - 09h00 *Intercontinental Hotel V Centenario - Gran Caribe Hall*  
**PANEL 4 – CHALLENGES REGARDING GENDER EQUALITY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM**  
**Presentation 7** – “Equality and the women’s agenda in legislative power”  
**María Paula Romo**  
Coordinator of the Parliamentary Group for Women’s Rights  
Member of the National Assembly of Ecuador
- 09h00 - 09h30 **Presentation 8** – “Dimensions to consider in a strategy aimed at empowering women with a political career”  
**Evangelina García Prince**  
Former Senator and former Minister of State of Venezuela  
Panel moderator: Magda Rodríguez  
Deputy of the Dominican Republic
- 09h30 - 11h00 Discussion



11h00 - 11h30 Coffee Break

11h30 - 12h30 **PANEL 5 – THE SITUATION OF WOMEN POLITICIANS IN THE CARIBBEAN**

**Presentation 9** - "The difficulties to be overcome to increase the participation of women in political activities in Haiti, in an unstable socio-economic context "

**Edmonde Beazile**

Senator of Haiti

*Moderator of the round-table: "The Haitian experience in the recent elections: the case of women politicians"*

Haitian parliamentarians

12h30 - 13h00 Discussion – delegates and Haitian parliamentarians

13h00 - 14h00 Lunch

14h00 - 15h30 Conclusions, final document, and commitments.

15h30 Guided city tour

## IV. KEYNOTE ADDRESS

### **“The Political Leadership of Women: Action Plan for the Americas”**

Santo Domingo, June 30th and July 1st

*Linda Machuca Moscoso*

***Member of the  
Ecuador Assembly  
President of FIPA’s  
Group of Women  
Parliamentarians***



Honourable Deputy Abel Martínez Durán, President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Dominican Republic, Distinguished Milagros Ortiz Bosch, former president of the Dominican Republic.

Honourable Deputy, Lucía Medina, Vice President of the Chamber of Deputies.

Distinguished Mrs. Amaia Pérez, Coordinator of the UN Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women in the Dominican Republic and special representative of Mrs. Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director of UN Women.

Honourable Amarilis Santana, President of the Equity and Gender Committee of the Senate of the Dominican Republic.

Honourable Magda Rodríguez, President of the Equity and Gender Committee of the Chamber of Deputies of the Dominican Republic.



Parliamentarians of the Americas, ladies and gentlemen.

In 1929, English writer Virginia Woolf delivered a conference to a group of women that would become a landmark in the history of feminism. The conference was suggestively titled “A Room of One’s Own”. Here Woolf underlines the importance of having independence, a room of one’s own, a haven of creation, especially, if a woman wanted to write fiction. Although her thoughts are related to literary writing, the power of her statement could not remain within the merely artistic field. In her words, in the forcefulness of her enlightened reflection, there was something else; this “room of one’s own” was a sort of symbolic proclamation, the expression of a deep political awareness, an individual conquest.

I quote her words from a political rather than an artistic point of view as Hannah Arendt already regarded the “Greek polis as the paradigm of a space of equals”. A space where all shared a common language and had the possibility of making their voices heard.

Today, more than eighty years later, we are gathered here in the warm Dominican Republic to ratify that, after a struggle fought by thousands of women so far, we have already conquered this “room of our own”. Each of us, my fellow women parliamentarians, represents a step forward on the road to empowerment, a solid rock in the construction of democracy. And this, rather than being a necessary declaration, constitutes luminous evidence.

Politics, conceived as the activities aimed at promoting social welfare, should be ratified through parliamentary actions that go beyond words. Thus, to meet here and now makes sense. In each of the presentations, in the voice of each of you, men and women, gathered here is the *raison d’être* of politics, of this special training and experience sharing workshop that will renew our energy.

The workshop titled “**The Political Leadership of Women: Action Plan for the Americas**” has three goals. First, to **strengthen** the political participation of women parliamentarians by learning about the experiences of other women related to the political and/or academic fields (with a special focus on the Caribbean region). Second, to **understand** the challenges of the current democratic systems in order to ensure substantial women’s participation in the drafting of legislation and national public policies. One of the challenges perceived within our systems relates to equal participation, just as equal is the world in terms of statistical data. But, it is not only a matter of increasing participation in numbers but also in quality, a participation that may help build a more fraternal and equal social order away from patriarchal power.

Knowing that if we have a woman parliamentarian we can count on her working for social justice that may lead to a deep change regarding equality between men and women.

Finally, the third goal is to **establish** strategic geographical links to construct joint action networks based on regional objectives that may respond to the mandate of the people and specific groups we represent.

In order to reach these goals, we have set up discussion panels, each including two presentations by experienced women in the political and academic fields. The **Panel “Leadership and Political Empowerment”** will open with the participation of Dominican Deputy Minou Tavárez Mirabal and Canadian expert Almas Jiwani; these presentations will be followed by those by Liz Meléndez of Peru and, finally, by the experienced words of Dr. Milagros Ortíz Bosch.

The second panel “**Migration and Afro-descendants**” will include a presentation by María del Mar García from Spain, followed by “**Challenges regarding Gender Equality and Political Participation in the Democratic**



**System”** by academician Lourdes Contreras, Assembly Member María Paula Romo of Ecuador, and former Senator Evangelina García Prince of Venezuela.

The closing panel **“The Situation of Women Politicians in the Caribbean”** will consist of a presentation by Senator Edmonde Supplice Beauzile of Haiti, followed by an open discussion with six women parliamentarians from Haiti.

I would like to stress the fact that we have hosted this event in Santo Domingo on account of the symbolic value it has in women’s struggle, in favour of women, and in honour of the Mirabal heroines. Another equally important reason for our presence in the Dominican Republic is that, after our last meeting of the Group of Women Parliamentarians in Quito, we saw the need to find a space to specifically discuss issues of concern to the Caribbean parliamentarians. For these and other relevant reasons, we have encouraged the creation of fraternal links with Central American countries, especially in the Caribbean, to show our commitment to the outcomes of our last meeting.

It seems that the hardships of our own realities as well as the geographical distances have driven us apart. But now we have the chance to get closer, to reach agreements, commitments, to generate projects and an action plan regarding our work based on these meetings.

The dialogue between nations must have a purpose. It should not be limited to formal ceremonies. Above all, it should be aimed at promoting specific actions to improve the quality of life of our people, who are sometimes the victims of the most terrible catastrophic events, such as the Haitian people. It is to them that, from Ecuador and on behalf of all the participants here, I would like to send our sympathetic greetings.

At this point, I would also like to point out that, when designing this training workshop, which is above all a fraternity gathering, we

thought of convening all the Haitian parliamentarians, whose presence honours this event and allows us to help our sister nation in a symbolic reconstruction by providing tools for their political empowerment, leadership, and work development.

I would like to thank all the organizations and people who have made this event possible. Our sister nation the Dominican Republic for her fraternal hospitality, demonstrated by the strong support of the Chamber of Deputies, represented by its President, Dr Abel Martínez Durán; the Government of Canada, through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA); the National Assembly of Ecuador, particularly the Parliamentary Group on Women's Rights; UN Women's headquarters in Ecuador, Dominican Republic, and Haiti; the United Nations Development Programme UNDP –Dominican Republic; the Ministry of Tourism of the Dominican Republic; Hampton Castillo of Banco Promérica; and the Embassy of Ecuador in the Dominican Republic for their significant contribution and warm support. My special thanks also go to FIPA, which is currently in the process of changing its name to ParlAmericas, for continually supporting the work of the Group of Women Parliamentarians. Our acknowledgement to all its organizations and their members.

Now I invite you, my dear women parliamentarians, to ratify our commitment to the other women, to the voiceless women who, day by day, build a better world, who fight for justice, for well-being, for a good life. To those whose voices are not heard but whose echo is within us. Let us recall, as stated by a fellow academician that “the elected women should bear in mind that holding a political position is neither a starting point nor an ending point, and that they will be subject to the approval of the other women and of history only upon completion of their tenure.” Therefore, on behalf of future generations and of those who have helped women enjoy social and political rights, and on behalf of those who have paved the way for us to become women parliamentarians, let us smooth the way.



With these words, I would like to welcome you, men and women parliamentarians and observers, to this meeting, and I wish that during these days together we may continue to build rooms of our own, while seeking real equality, and may devise an action plan for the women and for the peoples of the Americas.

Thank you very much.

Santo Domingo, June 30th 2011.





***V. Summary of  
presentations***



*Opening Ceremony. Chamber of Deputies Plenary,  
Santo Domingo.*



**Minou Tavárez Mirabal**

*Dominican Republic*



*Worthy daughter of Minerva Mirabal. As a Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Mirabal was in charge of foreign policy between 1998 and 2000. Elected as a Member of Parliament in 2002, and re-elected again in 2006 and in 2010 until 2016. Her presentation is a forceful and consistent call for accountability, unity, and rethinking the women’s political agenda. It is an overall introductory view that is worth disseminating.*

## **EVERYTHING IS AT STAKE**

The suggestive title of her presentation “EVERYTHING IS AT STAKE” has masterfully shown that women are far from being a minority, so that our leadership should put an end to our own autism. We should reach out beyond ourselves. Be more broad-minded and demanding.

Minou insisted it is time for our struggles for equality to be fought as a claim related to other social, political, economic, and ecological claims. And that these claims should be made visible as such, because in order to

approach the issue of citizenship we should understand it as a relationship between the people and the State, and this gives rise to an endless variety of new challenges.

Ms. Mirabal pointed out that the certainty of our world's fragility has kept us here, just as we have been born, amidst all the evils of humankind; poverty, inequality, and injustice. And to speak of this is to speak of human rights and citizenship, of politics and democracy. We cannot refer to women's political leadership if our action plan does not include unifying our agendas in that direction. It is not only a matter of women changing, but of our societies changing, in a world where everything is interrelated, and hence, where everything is at stake.

She states that the first thing is to simply continue to CONCEIVE OURSELVES, like we have been doing slowly but steadily. To develop a school of thought that may capture the very essence of a discourse in which hackneyed concepts—equally serving the progressives and the conservatives, the dominant and the dominated, the victimizer and the victim— are revitalized. Feminism should be represented as a social movement that always opposes and resists the current situation.

She also believes that humankind would have been different had some women not conceived themselves as women politicians. When referring to today's scenario, Amelia Valcárcel states there are western women's pending agendas that reflect what has been accomplished in order to have citizens bearing full rights in all democracies; the first one, focused on equal opportunities and fundamental rights; the second agenda, driven by the suffragettes in connection with educational and political rights; and yet a third agenda claiming for the rights related to the body, maternity, etc. When referring to the so-called feminization of poverty, she states that this phenomenon includes women waking up earlier and going to bed later; eating less, getting sick more and ageing faster; less educated women and head of households in a large number of cases (36% of Dominican households); getting into prostitution increasingly younger; and finally, migrant women



that also feminize remittances and are often victims of trafficking and child prostitution (UNDP information on the Region).

After making a critical analysis of her country, Minou says that, given the new global and local arena, it is important to politicize those “inherited” agendas in the face of the terrible truth of an increasingly foreign world where virtually every culture or problem, however remote, inevitably and quickly impacts the whole that we have become. Every reality, every region, every country, every city, every neighbourhood, moreover, every woman, and every individual has an agenda waiting to be resumed.

She underscores that it has been a long way, and we had to start demonstrating that women are not inferior. This took off from concepts such as moral inferiority, legal inferiority, and political inferiority. The qualitative leap in our discourse and in our approach to ordinary issues, in the way we conceive ourselves as women politicians and as our nations’ frontline stakeholders becomes evident in a paradigmatic way.

Minou appeals to reflection and says that, if we lower our guard in the face of specific conquests attained so far regarding rights and legislation and citizenship, or if we yield to the temptation of the ghetto, we will be much closer to losing everything, to going backwards. Prior to concluding, she says that we should try out a recipe that is more rigorously human in recognizing the issues requiring us to participate in urgent claims and strategies, in a more diverse and complex way.

Minou finally insists on the responsibility to put a total and unquestioned end to indifference, injustice, poverty, and inequality. Because everything, absolutely everything is at stake.

## **Highlights from the debate between parliamentarians and the expert**

1. We have to overcome our own autism. Our claims should be related to social, ecological, and other claims vis-à-vis the State.
2. Political activity in political parties has been demonized to the detriment of citizenship.
3. The exercise of citizenship is only possible in democracy. A first step is to defeat the over representation of men in Parliament.
4. We should not lower our guard remembering past conquests; we have to continue our struggle against inequality.
5. There are huge inequality problems. The gender perspective is an inescapable exercise in responsibility; we need a more democratic, diverse, and complex recipe.
6. The time has come for resistance to become confluence.
7. Our essence, akin to solidarity, is political; we have to capitalize on all opportunities. We need more good politics to bring solutions to the world.
8. Our new agenda is very much like the agenda we keep at home; basically more democracy.



**Almas Jiwani**

*Canadá*



*Has built her life as a successful business woman. She is very committed to humanitarian aid and has attained significant achievements for several social sectors. She works on strengthening women's position in the business world. Current President of the National Committee for UN Women, Canada.*

## **WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS**

She starts pondering about women's acknowledged rights, pointing out that today women enjoy more freedom and rights but differences still exist. She strongly insists that women have to be provided with a voice and means in order to achieve their economic empowerment, considering we are in the era of women's economic empowerment.

The UN Human Development Report states that an estimated \$16 trillion in global output is currently invisible, of which \$11 trillion is estimated to be produced by women. Women produce 50% of the food and perform 66% of the world's work, yet earn much less than what they produce.

She also highlights women's underrepresentation in the Upper and Lower houses of Parliaments, adding that without gender equality in our parliaments, poverty, economic progress and societal advancement is impossible. The economic oppression of women stands as a stark reminder of how difficult it is to realize humankind's full human potential. She stated that in an address by UN Secretary General, Mr. Ban-ki Moon said that investing in women is not only the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do. When women have access to finances, credit, technologies, and markets, they are likely to expand their businesses and contribute effectively to sustained economic growth and development.

She also mentioned that the Executive Director of UN Women, Michelle Bachelet, who was the past President of Chile, is perhaps the best case-study to illustrate the impact women's political participation in high level decision making processes can have in the Americas. In her tenure as President of Chile, Ms. Bachelet implemented a fiscal policy that was gender sensitive and ensured that gender and work-wage disparity was audited. It is particularly worth underscoring that only when women have full access to decision making will laws, policies, and budgets reflect the needs of all citizens and support women's rights.

Prior to concluding, she pointed out that women legislators have to keep the flame for gender equality burning and bring light and justice to those less fortunate women that are suffering from discrimination in the work place, women who are deprived of their educational rights, women that are victims of an unfair wage gap in the economic recession, and finally younger women that face economic barriers to breaking through the glass ceiling due to institutionalized forms of hetero-patriarchy.

### **Highlights from the debate between parliamentarians and the expert**

1. The ideal of women's economic empowerment and equality may come true with greater participation of women parliamentarians and other political stakeholders.



2. A significant gender earning gap persists, despite significant strides towards decreasing the gender gap in education. Furthermore, in various countries, especially in the Caribbean and South America, women are continually denied the right to ownership over their ancestral land and to acquire profits from their produce cultivated on the land.
3. What are required are gender-sensitive governance reforms, capacity-building initiatives, and advocacy that will make all elected officials more effective at promoting gender equality.
4. Parliamentarians must also play a significant role in reforming international trade sectors to be more conducive to women's participation, especially integrating women entrepreneurs into global production and supply chains.
5. Likewise, parliamentarians may lead the advancement of fair play for women in work , legislature, board rooms and/or the economic affairs of our countries.
6. The numbers of senior women mediators should be increased in Governments to detect and prevent discrimination.
7. The message of gender equality should be taken to your respective ridings and attempt to work with UN Women regional offices to forge an agenda whose paramount objective (both at the local and national level) should be expanding women's voice, leadership and participation.



*Panel 1: Leadership and Political Empowerment, second part.*



Liz Meléndez

Perú



*Holds a BA in Sociology from the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (Peru) and a Master's Degree in Gender Equality in Social Sciences from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Spain). Works at the Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán and is National Coordinator of the Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defence of Women's Rights (CLADEM – PERU).*

## **THE RISE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN THE ABSENCE OF TRUE EQUALITY. WHAT HAPPENED TO AUTONOMY?**

Can we truly say we have attained equality?, Meléndez wonders at the start of her presentation. To answer this question she says that, in most countries, today's women enjoy greater opportunities than women in the past, and acts of violence and discrimination against women have been delegitimized through the creation of laws penalizing these acts. However, it is necessary to rethink the meaning of real equality and its actual impact.

Based on a number of studies, it may be said that people reject violence against women, but might tolerate it for the sake of family union.

According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), presently, a gender equality agenda is not just an enumeration of the policies that are needed, but an acknowledgment of the transformations under way that involve new roles for the State, the market and the family, all with a view to achieving an egalitarian society. In turn, the recognition of inequality requires a legal acknowledgment of discrimination, as well as policymaking and capacity-building for the common good, so that people may escape the tyranny of tradition and prejudices.

Thus, attaining equality demands a deep cultural, political and economic transformation. If the advancement of women had succeeded in consolidating this notion, which does not mean a conceded advantage, women's autonomy would no longer be Utopia, and their parliamentary participation would have been over 22.1%. The country with the highest women's representation in South America is Argentina (38%) and Colombia, the lowest (8%), while representation is measured at 20% in Peru and at 28% in the Dominican Republic.

Liz Meléndez states that there is still a deficit in the exercise of sexual and reproductive rights and that the struggle for women's access to justice continues. From another perspective, although more women can now access post-high school studies, this does not translate into equal salaries or into equal opportunities to access or keep a job.

She adds that it is not enough to guarantee the creation of laws and spaces for women to participate. It is necessary to guarantee contexts where women's leadership and participation can be developed undisturbed, free from work overload (including domestic work) and in workplaces where women's human rights are respected. This unequal workload may be identified, for instance, in the fact that Colombian women work 63 hours per week, in Ecuador, women work a total of 66 hours and in Mexico, 86 hours, while their male counterparts spend much less time at work. For this and many other reasons, we should ask ourselves whether the famous quota legislation has succeeded in ensuring real equality.



It is noted that the transition from formal equality to true equality cannot be achieved unless a real social transformation occurs having an impact on the existing inequalities. ECLAC's conclusion for the Region is worth highlighting:

“The subordination of women is apparent in the labour market, as reflected in the sexual division of labour and discrimination, which, given their limited physical and political autonomy, prevent women from making their own reproductive decisions, taking action to put a stop to violence against them and participating in public and private decision-making mechanisms. Differences in income and in the total number of hours worked reflect the prevailing gender inequality in the region.” (ECLAC 2010)

### **Highlights from the debate between parliamentarians and the expert**

1. Renew efforts so that the transition to true equality should not only translate into equal opportunities but also into overcoming social inequality by challenging the social organization system that supports it.
2. Struggle for greater presence of women in political and decision-making spaces, by promoting political culture change, so that women can act with autonomy, without fear of violence and in alignment with their personal lives.
3. Strengthen leadership built upon a broad democratic base and on a new social contract between men and women.
4. A plural intercultural gender-based democracy, acknowledging the other, and transformations aimed at the redistribution of power and wealth.

5. Social and political strategies to reach a physical, economic and decision-making autonomy, within the framework of justice and active citizenship.

6. Women's active participation and their claims at the local government level.



## Milagros Ortíz Bosch

*Dominican Republic*



*Leader of the Dominican Revolutionary Party. She was senator for the National District in 1994 and 1998, when she was appointed Vice President, thus being the first woman to hold that office in the Dominican Republic. As senator, she coordinated and achieved the most significant legislative reform in favour of the Dominican women since 1942, when the women's suffrage was granted.*

*She speaks of struggle and power and confesses she has been in prison, deported, and in exile, but continues to believe in democracy.*

### **BUILDING POWER: A WOMAN POLITICIAN'S POINT OF VIEW**

I am going to speak of power, force, conquests, and struggles, because I am here before you as a woman politician. Thus begins Dr. Ortiz Bosch's presentation.

She says this a special moment for humankind, what with the development of social networks, new technological tools, and communication and information technologies.

She mentions Carlos Matus, who talks about strategy to attain a transcendent future, which is a way of coping with opposing forces to overcome resistance. In our struggle, this relates to overcoming the resistance of a large part of the universe that still does not accept the equality of rights and responsibilities between men and women.

This strategy means placing POWER, which is a force, at the service of an IDEA, so as to impose it on everyone else. There should be a willingness to become a prevailing social force that may equally participate in the drafting of public policies. The idea of equality should be complemented with true democracy. How far have we got? Is the power we hold enough to eliminate gender-based discrimination?

She points out that the key lies in the forces that may be created, which spring from social energy. What matters are these social forces that should develop away from brute force, which has been replaced by intelligence and technological developments. It is a promising time in view of all the past achievements in favour of women. We should not rest on our laurels. We have to politicize all these energies to bridge the gap.

She states this is applicable to our political parties and wonders how to develop the forces required to face the changes towards needed to attain our equality.

She answers this question saying we have walked backwards, very slowly, and that we are a process under construction.

Rights are never given but conquered.



Power is representing the voiceless; power should join other social forces and all those advocating women's equality. Therefore, we should struggle for an institutional framework.

We should focus on a struggle discourse but with representation. More women creating leadership and gaining more participation. We should also refer to economy, globalization, and child labour.

It is important to understand that globalization, properly conceived, is inclusive and goes beyond financial globalization. In this sense, we need a discourse advocating social economy. We need to claim for rights but eschewing the discourse of complaint to raise the flag of the way we have paved, the history of the struggle for equality now aided by education and technological developments. Also a discourse encouraging alliances but with a clear explanation of women's contribution to the state and to public policies as social capital.

She concludes saying that we should be champions of institutional frameworks without any constraints to create leadership. We should recall that only equal women can create equality. We are here because we win battles slowly. We have thus gained the acknowledgement of our equality.

### **Highlights from the debate between parliamentarians and the expert**

1. We seek power as a force at the service of the idea of equality.
2. We want to work with the social forces that create power.
3. We should take on everything related to the full exercise of human rights and to the elimination of gender-based discrimination, seeking alliances and politicizing the movement.

4. Experience has taught us that the management of processes should be designed so as to obtain small victories that turn into a force accompanying us until reaching the final strategy.
5. A renewed discourse should acknowledge the priority of globalizing the equality of rights.
6. Democracy, humanisation of politics, environment, the fight against corruption, good public policies, fiscal accountability, among other topics, require the participation and leadership of women.



*Parliamentarians of Ecuador*



**Lourdes Contreras**  
*Dominican Republic*



*Academician and feminist. Master in Gender and Development. Postgraduate Diploma in International Relations in the Caribbean, Diploma in Gender in Public Policy. Specialist in Gender Analysis and Gender Mainstreaming in Public Policy. A renowned women's movement leader in the Dominican Republic.*

## **CHALLENGES OF THE WOMEN'S AGENDA: FROM DECREED RIGHTS TO EXERCISED RIGHTS, THROUGH POLITICAL ACTION**

Ms. Contreras points out that the starting point is to take a stance regarding the analysis of social inequalities, of women vs. men, and also of some groups of women vs. other groups depending on their social status and other parameters. It is essential to develop an observation capacity regarding the inequalities created and to develop such a capacity to identify women's oppression.

Ms. Contreras states that the legislative agenda implies finding coincidences because, by understanding women's oppression in the hierarchical structure of our society, it will be possible to set priorities for

public policies. Everything should be oriented, first, towards the need to bridge the gap between decreed rights and exercised rights.

In this exercise, she continues, there is a truly epistemological break in social sciences, where certain traditionally accepted realities tend to disappear: the sexual division of labour; the division between the public and the private world; the distinction between productive and reproductive work; labour market segmentation and wage discrimination; sexual and reproductive roles. This panorama should be supplemented by the reality in each country concerning such important issues as family, violence, cultural change, and political praxis.

These criteria should help better define the fight against social inequalities, based not only on quantitative facts but also on studies conducted from a qualitative point of view.

She believes that if we want to bridge the gap between decreed rights and exercised rights we should also ask ourselves the following questions; are we interested in the dynamics, the meaning, and the direction of women's participation in politics? How can we have an impact on each political space with a gender perspective?

In this sense, I would like to insist on the responsibilities of women parliamentarians in building a relationship with women's social organizations and in connection with political parties, especially insofar as they may influence our struggles. With each specific reality we should ask whom to co-opt, with whom compare or define gender alliances. The power of the political parties we belong to –as hierarchical and masculinised structures– can make us lose sight of the assistance we should give women to whom we owe the vote and our vocation.

She wonders about female representation as a whole. Are we interested in increasing the number of women parliamentarians? Yes, indeed we are, but bearing in mind that we should review the issue of the



patriarchal elites in political parties so as to understand the meaning of those women representatives and whether they effectively serve the cause. Ms. Contreras thinks that we should insist on creating gender alliances when facing difficulties regarding parliamentary response to our requests. How and with whom our women legislators wish to develop alliances to respond to the commitments made through the people's delegation of power? She pointed out that it is also essential that statistical figures be reflected on the reality faced by women, for instance, after considering the reproductive and productive work or the violence affecting them. These issues are all relevant for the analysis of our legislative agenda.

### **Highlights from the debate between parliamentarians and the expert**

1. In order to define public policies in our favour, we should be very clear about women's stance vis-à-vis social inequalities and their incidence on our struggles.
2. Review the specific information contained in the agendas of each country in order to incorporate a sound gender perspective.
3. Smartly establish new alliances, beyond the political parties supporting us.
4. Ensure the quality of our female representation.



*Participation of Suriname`s representative during the debate.*



**Mar García**

*Spain*



*BA in Philosophy and Letters from Universidad Pontificia Comillas and with a Master in Assessment of Public Policies and Programmes from Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Coordinator of coordinates the Dominican Republic UN Women research and training programme on “Gender, Migration, and Development”, BA in Philosophy and Letters, Researcher<sup>1</sup>.*

## **CARE AND MIGRATION: A STRATEGIC AREA OF INTERVENTION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF, AND EQUALITY IN THE REGION**

Her presentation is focused on the women’s role in care and migration. Care is the invisible basis of the socioeconomic system; care work is unpaid and it only enters the public debate when care needs are not being met, and when the discussion revolves around who is accountable for providing care to children and old people.

The long-standing connection between care, social inequality and exclusion, which is today taking on global dimensions, needs to be addressed from a transnational perspective of care demand and provision. The fact that

people move and work in the care sector is internationalised through global care chains: the interconnection of households in different places around the world that transfer caregiving tasks from one household to another.

The other evidence is that care is neither socially nor economically valued, thus the burden of caregiving falls upon those who have decreased ability to make their own choices and decisions. Here lies the root of the segmentation by sex, ethnicity and/or migratory status. Global care chains highlight the fact that migrant women become inserted into their destination countries through care work.

Therefore, it may be concluded that the Latin American and Caribbean countries are a key part of structural adjustment processes, through increased migration that fills up certain spaces in the labour market of some economies. Increasingly, supranational actors (multinational corporations, international cooperation agencies, multilateral agencies) are thus involved in the provision of care, and the industry is being outsourced to other locations.

Hence, caregiving may be seen as the core of a new sustainable economic model. Care rights involve a series of other rights, with responsibilities for the State and the market which are jointly accountable. It is evident that the serious problems associated with denial of care rights in countries of origin are not created by migration, nor does migration resolve these problems in destination countries. Efforts should be made towards the acknowledgment of labour rights, the rights of transnational households, and a fair global care system.

It should be noted that migration is a new source of inequality for women, and even of abuse by other women. Seen in this light, it is an issue between women as they are always accountable for caregiving. However, this is related to men's attitude as they continue to exclude themselves from the economy of care.



Both in the countries of origin and destination, changes have occurred in gender relations that have helped expose latent problems. There is a process of intensified privatisation of social reproduction and a refashioning of the sexual division of labour. Might this be the old solution of avoiding public care responsibilities through an unjust distribution of labour, now with a new transnational dimension?

### **Highlights from the debate between parliamentarians and the expert**

1. Invisibilization of the economy of care.
2. Transnational phenomenon as a result of migration and of a process of structural adjustment.
3. Joint accountability by the countries of origin and destination of migrants, including their economies and labour markets.
4. New sexual division of labour, with doubts pending about the full exercise of rights.

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<sup>1</sup> Her presentation is based on the publication *Cruzando Fronteras. Migración y desarrollo desde una Perspectiva de Género* Amaia Pérez Orozco et al. UN Women. © United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-INSTRAW). Dominican Republic, 2008.



*Participation of Parliamentarians during the debate.*



**María Paula Romo**

*Ecuador*



*PhD in Law and Master in Government and Public Administration, Specialist in Gender Studies. Member of the National Assembly, in the Legislation and Oversight Committee, presided the Special Committee on Civil and Criminal Matters. At present, she is Member of the National Assembly and the President of the Special Committee on Justice and State Structure.*

## **EQUALITY AND THE WOMEN'S AGENDA IN LEGISLATIVE POWER**

Ms. Romo begins explaining that she will especially focus on the women's agenda in the legislative power. And that we should bear in mind that a change has occurred: starting with an average of 5% throughout Latin America in 1990, women's parliamentary representation has reached 18%. It seems we are above the world's average.

She states that the path is uncertain because what is achieved in one period gets lost in the next. At the moment, we insist on having well-designed quotas, which should be translated into equality and list positions for at-large candidates, respecting the presence of women on electoral lists

and in decision-making positions. When the quota is 50% we can speak of equality.

While the main positions continue to be held by men, we demand greater women's participation in decision-making bodies and the implementation of affirmative action measures based on the existence of the actual inequality they attempt to correct.

The institutionalization of affirmative action is underlined in a proposal by President John F. Kennedy regarding workers engaged in public works without regard to race, creed, color, or national origin. All this comes to prove that this formula and the quota system are not an "invention" of women.

Therefore, quotas seek to ensure real equality of a group making up for real inequality. Quotas are established in the Constitution and also by CEDAW (Sections 3 and 4), which proves that they are not a concession by the states but international obligations. The goal of all this is to achieve real equality. Quotas help democratize democracy.

The aim is to demonstrate that such a male-dominated political space can be accessed by women. But there is a question still pending: Does the very presence of women in politics help improve the lives of other women? Does our agenda include rights for all the women?

There is a reality we need to change. According to ECLAC, gender inequality at work still exists. In Latin America and the Caribbean, women are paid only 80 percent of their male counterparts' wages for doing the same job. Of the region's total income, women account for only 33%. On average, 40% of urban women and 53% of rural women have no personal income (2005). Other inequality and discrimination data include: avoidable deaths, teenage pregnancy, violence, and sexual and reproductive health.

Things being so, is care work the women's *raison d'être*? In the division of labour, women are assigned the undervalued and totally



unacknowledged tasks of social reproduction. If this injustice continues to exist and there is so much disregard for the value of women's work overload, today's goal is to seek reconciling work.

All these issues constitute the core of our women politicians' agenda, which should be included in the agenda of the traditionally excluded. We are paving the way for valuing diversity and stepping up the fight against discrimination; our struggle is against all types of prejudice and exclusion.

### **Highlights from the debate between parliamentarians and the expert**

1. A process where quotas are a path, but where equality and respect for rights are the goal.
2. We have to focus on the disadvantages and violation of rights of all women as a whole.
3. We should challenge the modern individual's core model, with women that may pave the way for valuing diversity and stepping up the fight against any kind of discrimination.
4. Moreover, our struggle is against all types of prejudice and exclusion.





## Evangelina García Prince

Venezuela



*Studied Sociology and Anthropology, researcher, and university professor. Vice President of the UN Committee that monitors the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women-CEDAW. She has served on the Commission on the Status of Women Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN and has been part of the Bureau of the Standing Conference of ECLAC for the Integration of Women in Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. Also Chair of the Regional Network of Government Offices for Women. She was National Senator and Minister for the Promotion of Women in Venezuela as well as member of the Board of the Commission for State Reform.*

## **DIMENSIONS TO CONSIDER IN A STRATEGY AIMED AT EMPOWERING WOMEN INTO A POLITICAL CAREER**

García Prince begins her presentation by mentioning empowerment strategies. The road of women parliamentarians who intend to use their parliamentary power is long and not without challenge, she says. When it comes to the political arena, energy spent on trifling matters is energy ill-spent.

García Prince stresses that the struggle should not only focus on increasing the number of women in politics ... “because, in some cases, we are going backwards.” Women’s representation in politics amounts to 20% – one fifth – of the political spectrum. This can hardly be a source of pride and enthusiasm for us. In addition to this, we are subject to factors such as subordination, exclusion or fictitious inclusion. Furthermore, a political mimicry of exclusion exists. Hence, we should be seeking for a power paradigm shift.

García Prince reminds of the need to remain loyal to the gender category but warns against thinking that will suffice. This category endeavours to rule out discrimination and prevent women’s cause from going backwards. The patriarchal culture is alive and well, and it trickles down to institutions and identities. We want power, but not in order to become clones or transvestites of male leadership models. We aspire to shared-power and transactional leadership models.

At present, women’s participation in politics is challenged by worth considering factors, such as subordination, subordinated inclusion, underrepresentation and even fictitious inclusion. This exclusion (or subordinated inclusion) is evidenced in:

- Significant public service positions.
- Democratic dialogue.
- Public agendas.
- Partisan structures and doctrines.
- Electoral legislation, parties, electoral financing mechanisms, media coverage, time management.

Public policies address this subject matter in a general and biased way; they are characterized by constitutional provisions, equality laws, and legislation related to political parties and elections. Rarely have they resulted in concrete plans. In the rare cases when they have, plans vanished into thin air through lack of implementation.



Effectively empowering women who make a career in politics, as well as women's cause, is not only about training women. It is also about modifying electoral systems (quotas, administration and financing), bringing about real equality resulting not from quota systems but from the exercise of inherent rights, democratizing political parties (to redress the decrease of women's representation therein), strengthening leadership, and promoting better media coverage of these issues. Attention should be centred on modifying media sensitivity. At present, inequality prevails – we account for one fifth of global news coverage, although we make up more than half of humankind.

We are called to work around four central themes – sensitization, capacity building, research and diffusion of leadership – and along various core lines, to better strive for equality and a gender perspective in parliamentary activities. Our central quest for equality will also benefit from technical skills and a well-equipped toolkit.

### **Highlights from the debate between parliamentarians and the expert**

1. Women have been rendered invisible in the public affairs arena. They inhabit a sub-world.
2. Strengthening of mentoring programs and institutional bodies, as well as multidimensional training and capacity building, are needed. Legislative and parliamentary leadership are required, in addition to a widespread approach.
3. Capacity building is crucial to women's empowerment. It calls for a sustained, sustainable, updated and flexible process, that allows for à la carte proposals (as required by each parliament). If this is about equality, we should develop our capacity to exercise it.
4. The meaning of empowerment is understood within the broad sense of what inherently pertains to women and within each country's political context.

5. Power is strength at the service of a given concept; yet, it is also dominance and force. We need empowerment and alliances to serve our concept of gender equality.

6. It is necessary to break the paradigm that actually rules the balance of power between men and women, by paying particular attention to those electoral systems that do not serve equality.



*Parliamentarians working after the Round Table.*



**Edmonde Beauzile**

*Haiti*



*She holds a BA in General Education Sciences from the University of Montreal, Canada, and a BA in Law from Haiti State University.*

*Deputy of the 45th Legislature. Since 2006, Assistant Secretary General of the Haitian Social Democratic Party. Elected senator and current president of the Committee on Education, Culture, Youth, and Sports; former Vice President of the Senate. Member of FIPA's Executive Committee and member of the GPA International Council.*

## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC INSECURITY AND HAITIAN WOMEN'S FEEBLE PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL MOBILITY**

Beauzile angles her presentation on Haitian women's weak participation in political mobility and on Haitian socio-economic insecurity. Beauzile stresses that politics serves the best interest of both men and women, for their peaceful coexistence. However, she says, it took a mighty struggle for women to emancipate. At this point of her country's unrestful

life, what begs answering is: Have the conquests of the past (women won their right to vote and be voted in 1950) placed women – or are we placed – in a better position within the current socio-economic context?

Beauzile starts by recapping the economic situation: economic conditions have not improved since 1990 for the eight million Haitians; the salaries of 75% of the population are under USD 2.5 per day, while some Haitians earn hardly USD 1 per day. There are no figures to illustrate the employment rate; however, 70% of Haitians are said to be unemployed, which includes 50% of the underemployment rate. A large portion of the economically active population hardly earns enough for survival.

Women's representation has been very slim. In 205 years of Haitian republican history, Ertha Pascal Trouillot was the only woman who ever ruled the State – for one year. In 2003, 6 out of 17 senators and 3 out of 80 deputies were women. After their last elections, 1 out of 30 senators and 6 out of 99 deputies are women. Only 2 of the 147 political parties are headed by women.

DISCRIMINATION is a fact and a painful injustice that prevents women from fully expressing their talents. Women are affected by cultural issues, such as traditional women's roles within the family, female monoparenting and poverty, lack of training, as well as violence against women. Beauzile states that poverty is an obstacle to belonging to political groups, since it can jeopardize women's insertion in the workplace.

The fight against INEQUALITY must continue. It is necessary to redefine educational policies and to revise school curricula, so that they prevent discrimination as well as all threats to social cohesion. Beauzile stresses that Haitians should dream of a country where women, far from being marginalized, gain access to their full dignity, to jobs within the public sector and to public service positions, according to their own ability. She lays emphasis on women's lack of training to face challenges and demands, and on the frequency with which women are victims of sexual blackmail.



Her presentation touches upon other issues related to cultural aspects, such as family responsibilities, the feminization of poverty and the head of household situation, as well as the systematic use of rape as a political weapon.

Beauzile lays emphasis on the need to establish a new educational policy that helps overcome stereotyping in curricula, since this reinforces discrimination and threatens social cohesion. To conclude, she argues that equality becomes reality when the same rules apply to all men and women alike, when men and women are positioned along the same starting line.

The final conclusions of the debate are expressed at the end of Panel 5, which includes Senator Edmonde Beauzile's presentation, as well as the presentations by the deputies who were part of the Round Table.

## **Round Table**

### **“The Haitian experience in the recent elections: The case of women politicians”**

Participants:

- Haitian Senator: Edmonde Supplice Beauzile.
- Diputadas de Haití: Marie Jossie Etinne, Guerda Benjamin Bellevue, Ruffine Labbé, Oglie Pierre y Marie Denise Bernadeau.

The five deputies and the senator who attended the workshop were able to share the work they do in the Legislature, as well as the challenging tasks they face in the light of the present conditions in Haiti. It is evidenced that Haiti is the country with lowest female representation in political affairs and in national life. The fact that there are only 6 women out of 129 parliamentarians faithfully mirrors women's situation in the country.

Women's safety is a serious issue. Many women politicians have been attacked during the last elections. One woman simply disappeared;

another one was severely beaten. It was stressed that their participation should reinforce democracy and the rule of law. However, women still face many challenges and obstacles: education, discrimination, safety, as well as lack of financing and support within their political parties.

At the time the comments were made, it was noted that inequality in our countries persists. Our struggle calls for innovation. Based on our analysis, we are called to react and support our Haitian sisters, in particular. Our Chilean sisters took it upon themselves to develop a manifesto in collaboration with other sisters, for its approval by the workshop. It was immediately approved and it is included at the end of this document.

The Round Table touched upon Haiti's political process since the country's early independence in 1804, the creation of the Women's League for Social Action in 1934, and the right to vote and be voted in 1950. This political process was marked by periods of higher or lesser exercising of rights. Emphasis was also laid on the barriers that women have faced within a patriarchal, discriminatory society, as well as on their restricted access to training and formal education.

In the last elections, women won only 6 legislative seats. Against this backdrop, it was noted that women struggle to earn their place in politics. They push their way against those who have traditionally held power within the cultural subjugation framework and marginalized women by pushing them into their homemaker roles and out of academic spheres. A total of 53 female candidates ran for the 2010-2011 elections: 45 for Parliament and 8 for the Senate, but only six were elected. At the Round Table, MP Bernadeau reported attacks against women. A woman went missing; two had to be hospitalized; another woman was severely beaten.

Yet, women parliamentarians consider that, in spite of all the limitations Haitian women face, they are represented in the workforce and public spaces, and that – slowly but steadily – associations that will render women visible in politics are being formed. Women's participation in Haitian



political matters is essential to reinforce democracy and the rule of law. In the words of Beauzile, Haitians should dream of a nation where women are never again subject to marginalization; a nation where, in the political arena, women are as worthy as men; a nation whose laws treat both female and male citizens as equals; a nation where women can embody their full dignity, where their eligibility to hold public service positions depends solely on their abilities, talents and virtues.

The Round Table drew to its close with a fraternal applause that expressed the solidarity of all the men and women who attended the workshop.





***Political Leadership  
of Women:  
Action Plan for the Americas***

***VI. Excerpts from interviews about FIPA and the workshop***





During the workshop, attention was given to collecting the thoughts of some parliamentarians, observers, and of the experts, regarding FIPA's work and the workshop on "The Political Leadership of Women: Action Plan for the Americas".

Unfortunately, it was not possible to gather everyone's thoughts. Only some excerpts from these enriching interviews are included here. Below is the transcription of them:

## **ABOUT FIPA AND THE WORKSHOP**

### **Inputs from Parliamentarians**

#### **Carmen Granados**

*Costa Rica*

FIPA's main contribution is helping us recognize our great potential, our ability to make a difference in Parliament, as well as the worth of our own personal contribution. This is what FIPA has taught me. FIPA has made me feel that I must take this to my parliament. This connection with FIPA has been the best we could have ever had. FIPA's Group of Women Parliamentarians means strength and growth to me, at this particular time. The fact that I am part of this initiative today makes me certain that I will work to make FIPA grow and known in my own country.

#### **Minou Tavárez Miraval**

*Dominican Republic*

Ideas are the forces that move the world, and we must socialize them, share them, discuss them; we must perfect them, improve them and nurture them, as if they were precious seeds. Herein

lies the importance of this meeting [FIPA]. Poverty, injustice and discrimination lie at the root of every problem, regardless of which particular problem we are dealing with at any given time. These gatherings are important because they tool us to help each other, to empower the strengths and abilities we already have. Joining forces at these events is clearly a way of sharing and renewing our courage.

**Marie Jossie Etienne**

*Haiti*

FIPA allows me to meet Latin American women parliamentarians, which, in turn, allows me to return to my own country with an enriched solution-toolkit.

Listening to the experiences shared by other women parliamentarians enables me to return to my home country with a wealth of new ideas.

**Guerda Benjamin**

*Haití*

This has been my first FIPA event. I can very well see that the information and knowledge I have acquired here will allow me to work not only to emancipate women, but to develop new behaviours that facilitate the seize of power.



**Paco Moncayo**

*Ecuador*

The chance for male and female legislators to share experiences in order to build capacities and promote women's participation in national politics, and especially in their parliaments, would be enough, as far as the contribution made by FIPA and FIPA's Group of Women Parliamentarians is concerned. Training is also essential for women parliamentarians to perform not only their regular jobs, but to represent their gender. The work we have done in Ecuador amongst women in municipalities is transcendental and should be the subject matter of analysis. We have carried out this work in a context of national and international cooperation, with remarkable results.

**Ruffine Labbé**

*Haití*

I think this meeting has made a great contribution, in particular, to the exchange of ideas. This is an asset that will make us far more pragmatic at the time of exercising our power as Haitian legislators.

**Mónica Zalaquett**

*Chile*

FIPA affords us the opportunity to strengthen the network of women who choose to contribute through public service and politics. Moreover, it helps us develop a regional perspective to look at the realities affecting us, for instance, what is termed as "the economy of care."

**Graciela Iturraspe**

*Argentina*

In my opinion, FIPA's main contribution is capacity building. Opening up participation spaces is, I think, a challenge FIPA should undertake. I also thought it was important to raise the issue of training new legislators. It may well take a new legislator 6 to 8 months to learn the ABC of parliamentary work, including procedures. These represents 6 to 8 months of lost work. FIPA could play a fundamental role in improving this.

**María Elena Ruiz Yera**

*Cuba*

I think this FIPA event has been very important, especially for Cuban women. It made it possible for us to get acquainted with the thoughts and views of all the country delegates present. I trust that our Action Plan will result in an increased participation of women, particularly in the Americas, and it will further the integration required to know and work on concrete aspects of our problematic.

I was shocked by the situation in Haiti. Haitian women need us and they are desperately crying for help for their people.

**Magda Rodríguez**

*Dominican Republic*

Here we learn strategies to wield power and empower one another.



## Inputs from Observers & Sponsors

### UN Women

**Amaia Pérez - Representing Executive Director of UN Women, Ms. Michelle Bachelet**

UN Women has worked jointly with FIPA in the past. We think it is extremely important that we create these fora for collaboration and dialogue amongst elected and parliamentary women. It allows for the development of joint programs and means of communication. We wholeheartedly support them.

I think that UN Women and FIPA should share the goal of strengthening mechanisms that allow women – women parliamentarians in this case – to collaborate and work towards increasing women’s political participation and the number of women parliamentarians at various levels, as well. We would love to see more elected women at local government levels, as well as at all levels, because women account for 50% of the world population and should be proportionately represented in all decision-making bodies, in governments, as in all spheres of influence.

### Nielsen Pérez

Our Executive President, Michelle Bachelet, has stated the importance of diversifying women’s voices, leadership and political participation, which is a core issue of UN Women’s strategic plan. Within the framework of such plan, we are very interested in increasing participation, representation, as well as the tools and instruments for protection. Therefore, I think our joint work with FIPA has the potential to be powerful, not

only to strengthen leadership and women parliamentarians' performance quality, but to legislate on parliamentary work: control and legislation.

Women parliamentarians can work on very important tools for follow-up, political control, gender equality legislation, so that laws do translate into practice, so that they be enforced and result in the protection of women's and girls' rights.

## **MINUSTAH**

### **Walter Sama**

The work that FIPA has been developing is very important. Gathering the women parliamentarians of the hemisphere in Santo Domingo in order to work on the political agenda of female politicians is nothing but remarkable. Haiti is a classical example of women's underrepresentation in politics, especially in parliament. At present, there are only 6 women out of 129 parliamentarians in Haiti's parliament.

It is truly important to Haiti that FIPA has taken into consideration and that it has invited ALL women parliamentarians – all 6 of them are here, at this workshop. This 100% representation is worth noting. The women who represent Haiti at this forum today will share the experiences of our continent's parliamentarians with the Haitian people. More important still, they will share the methodologies, the approaches, and the perspectives that each of the countries represented here has, regarding women's political participation in parliament

In a not distant future, FIPA may help Haiti implement women's participation quota, which currently stands at 30%. Although implementing this new law remains a challenge, I think FIPA could help implement this legal mechanism to increase women's participation in the government.



## UNDP

### **Raissa Crespo-for the Gender Area. Democratic Governance Unit Consultant.**

Capacity-building activities such as this one are, no doubt, extremely relevant and necessary, especially when they are face-to-face and allow for human contact. They make FIPA's contribution great. Of course, face-to-face activities are not possible on an ongoing basis. However, they do help establish a continuous communication channel through technological means – through the Internet – as well as a community of practice and consultation. In the UNDP, such community is enabled through *América Latina Genera*.

This ongoing exchange will allow women parliamentarians to consult each other on issues or processes taking place in other countries, so they can profit from third parties' experiences, even if they will later adapt them to the situation, geography and history of their own countries. Getting acquainted with these experiences, lessons learned and processes undertaken is an important starting point.

Exchanging experiences is very important. It should be pursued on a permanent basis through the Internet. An Internet-enabled platform could be the means to share documents, research, processes and, in time, a new and more mature workshop that builds on the wealth of this exchange.

## Inputs from Experts

### **Dra. Milagros Ortiz Bosch**

*Former Vice President of the Dominican Republic*

Meeting with FIPA has afforded us the opportunity to learn about the experiences of women parliamentarians in America, and in particular, in Haiti and the Caribbean. These workshops help unify ideas, seek new methodologies and advance towards women's equality. Attaining equality represents a wealth of social equity and is therefore essential. When gender equality becomes a reality, men and society will develop a different perspective of State organization, which will benefit public finances and the progress of humankind.

### **Lic. Lourdes Contreras**

*Executive Director of the Centre for Gender Studies of the Universidad INTEC – Dominican Republic*

This event organized by FIPA and its Group of Women may impact all women parliamentarians in attendance. Engaging in this kind of dialogue is doubly enriching: it helps us see that we share the same problems and it helps us learn about the different solutions being sought for each of our countries.



***VII. Manifesto  
in support of Haiti***





## MANIFESTO

Today, July 1st 2011, we, the women parliamentarians of all the delegations representing our countries through women senators, deputies, and assembly members of the member countries of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA), meeting in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, at the workshop “The Political Leadership of Women: Action Plan for the Americas, after listening to the speeches of all the Haitian women parliamentarians (1 senator and 5 deputies) in full exercise of their duties, declare that:

1. We fully sympathise with the Haitian women parliamentarians and their work.
2. We denounce and condemn all political, physical, and psychological violence against our Haitian women parliamentary colleagues.
3. We request that, at each of the parliaments present here today, this violence should become visibilized and that a draft agreement or resolution should be prepared in repudiation of such acts.
4. We suggest that our parliaments should oversee the actions and resources sent to Haiti by some of our countries, so as to ensure their destination and proper use. In the understanding that such resources are aimed at contributing to the physical and institutional reconstruction of the Haitian people and State.





## ***VIII.Action Plan***





**THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN:  
ACTION PLAN FOR THE AMERICAS  
FIPA's Group of Women Parliamentarians  
Santo Domingo, June 30th and July 1st, 2011**

**ACTION PLAN**

**This document refers to the participants of the workshop  
“THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN”.**

**Work Areas**

**a) Women's Political Agenda**

1. Orientate our legislative efforts in each country toward the definition and execution of a political and legislative work agenda that may favour the effective protection of the wide diversity of women's rights and may attain objectively verifiable results in the action of accountable public powers.
2. Strive to have women parliamentarians openly oppose the clientelist policies still present in some parliaments and which damage and hamper women's legitimate legislative participation.

**b) Legislative Agenda**

3. In order to defeat women's fictitious political inclusion, influence the claims on legislation regarding equality, alternation, and quota of women and its enforcement.
4. Promote the creation of mixed working groups in each of the parliaments participating in the workshop “The Political Leadership of Women: Action Plan for the Americas” to implement women's rights.

5. Commit legislative action to creating new instruments that may eradicate all kinds of violence and to establishing mechanisms for government oversight regarding their enforcement.

**c) Training Agenda**

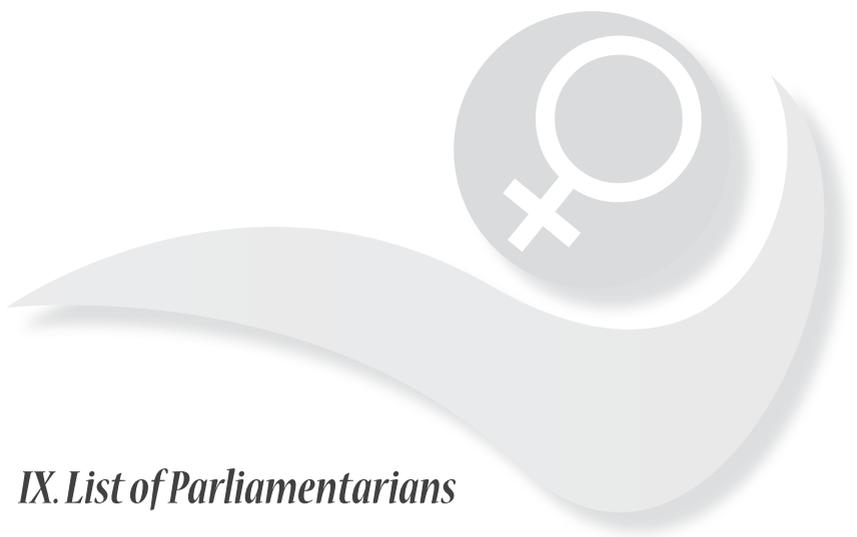
6. Promote the political training of women parliamentarians, particularly on the exercise of their first legislative tenure, by further developing their operating, technical, and personal skills for the fulfillment of their legislative and parliamentary leadership, through thematic modules covering the variety of issues required.

7. Set up and strongly support negotiation mechanisms with the public power in favour of gender claims, at each of the parliaments participating in the workshop “The Political Leadership of Women: Action Plan for the Americas”.

**d) Communication Agenda**

8. Set up a network to support, promote, and exchange legislative good practices and experiences, using FIPA’s website as a platform (the upcoming ParlAmericas), which will be available for next September.

9. Join efforts to change media sensitivity regarding women politicians, through visibilization strategies and campaigns that reveal prejudice in the media.



***IX. List of Parliamentarians***





Graciela Iturraspe  
*Deputy*



Alejandra Sepúlveda Orbenes  
*Deputy*

Mónica Zalaquett Said  
*Deputy*



Lina María Barrera Rueda  
*Representative*



Carmen María Granados Fernández  
*Deputy*



María Elena Ruíz Yera  
*Deputy*



Shiram Diana Atamaint  
*Assembly Member*

Linda Machuca Moscoso  
*Assembly Member*

Emilia Maruja Jaramillo Escobar  
*Assembly Member*

María Paula Romo  
*Assembly Member*

Paco Moncayo Gallegos  
*Assembly Member*



Blanca Noemi Coto Estrada  
*Deputy*

Carmen Elena Figueroa  
*Deputy*



Edmonde Supplice Beauzile  
*Senator*

Marie Jossie Etienne  
*Deputy*

Guerra Benjamin  
*Deputy*

Marie Dénise Bernadeau  
*Deputy*

Ogline Pierre  
*Deputy*

Ruffine Labbé  
*Deputy*



Blanca Judith Díaz Delgado  
*Senator*

María del Carmen Izaguirre Francos  
*Deputy*

María del Carmen Guzmán Lozano  
*Deputy*

Norma Esparza Herrera  
*Senator*

Magdalena Torres Abarca  
*Deputy*



Irma de Jesus Dávila Lazo  
*Deputy*



Karina Juliza Beteta Rubín  
*Congresswoman*



Adalberto Esteban Rosa Hernández  
*Deputy*

Adalgisa Fátima Pujols  
*Deputy*

Altagracia Herrera Brito  
*Deputy*

Altagracia González  
*Deputy*

Amarilis Santana Cedano  
*Senator*

Ana Miledy Cuevas  
*Deputy*

Angela Pozo  
*Deputy*

Aquiles Ledesma Alcántara  
*Deputy*

Barbara Yvelice Abreu Grullón  
*Deputy*

Catalina Paredes Pinales  
*Deputy*

Cristóbal Venerado Castillo Liriano  
*Deputy*

David Herrera  
*Deputy*

Eufracia Santiago Merán  
*Deputy*

Evangelina Sosa Vázquez  
*Deputy*

Evelin Andújar Matos  
*Deputy*

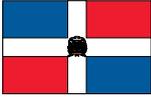
Gilda Moronta  
*Deputy*

Guadalupe Valdéz San Pedro  
*Deputy*

Isabel de la Cruz Javier  
*Deputy*

Johanny Mercedes Guzmán Rodríguez  
*Deputy*

José Antonio Díaz Reyes  
*Deputy*



José Francisco López Chávez  
*Deputy*

Josefa Castillo  
*Deputy*

Juan Maldonado  
*Deputy*

Juana Vicente  
*Deputy*

Kenia Milagros Mejía  
*Deputy*

Lucía A. Alba López  
*Deputy*

Magda Rodríguez Azcona  
*Deputy*

María Amparo Martínez  
*Deputy*

María Cándida Sánchez  
*Deputy*

Miguel Angel Jazmín De La Cruz  
*Deputy*

Minou Tavárez Mirabal  
*Deputy*

Nancy Altagracia Santos Peralta  
*Deputy*

Noris Elizabeth Medina Medina  
*Deputy*

Olfalida Almonte  
*Deputy*

Pedro Enrique De Óleo Veras  
*Deputy*

Rafael Tobías Crespo Pérez  
*Deputy*

René Polanco Vidal  
*Deputy*

Rosa Sonia Mateo Espinosa  
*Senator*

Santo Ramírez Bethancourt  
*Deputy*

Severina Gil Carrera  
*Deputy*

Sonya Abreu Villanueva  
*Deputy*



Jennifer Simons  
*Member of Parliament and  
Speaker of the House*

Jenny P. Soedardjo-Warsodikromo  
*Member of Parliament*

Noreen Hoi-Lai Cheung  
*Member of Parliament*



Paula Gopee-Scoon  
*Member of Parliament*

Stacy Roopnarine  
*Member of Parliament*







The work shown on the cover of this publication was produced by the internationally recognized Ecuadorian artist Pilar Bastos, who created it especially for this publication as a tribute to Minerva, Patria and María Teresa Mirabal.

The contours outline the faces of the Dominican heroines, just as this publication outlines the main lines of work necessary to move forward in building women's rights, for women and by women.

## **FIPA Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas**

