GENERAL MANUELA SAENZ (1797-1856) is the controversial and challenging Ecuadorian patriot whose picture illustrates the cover of these memoirs. Her relationship to Simón Bolívar and her many services to the fights for Independence in Ecuador, Colombia and Peru won her recognition as “the liberator of the Liberator”. One of the often forgotten causes to which she devoted her efforts is the rights of women, and she is also renowned for her firm, feminist stance. She died in exile, and almost completely neglected in Paita, Peru, during a diphtheria outbreak. She was buried in a common grave, but her campaign in Pichincha and Ayacucho has not been forgotten. The current Ecuadorian President declared her “Honorable General” on 22 May 2007, thus acknowledging a military rank already awarded to her in history books.
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Project undertaken with the financial assistance of
the Government of Canada through the Canadian
International Development Agency (CIDA)
The Framework of the Sixth Plenary Assembly of FIPA, the Assembly made the following recommendations:

1. That legislative measures be implemented to ensure equal representation of men and women in parliaments in the Americas.
2. That women parliamentarians in the Americas participate fully in the legislative process, moving beyond social and educational issues to deal with matters involving the economy, defence, security, etc.
3. That parliaments in the Americas work together to ensure that crimes such as rape, sexual abuse, family violence, etc., face sanctions when their perpetrators cross borders.
4. That women parliamentarians become interested in strengthening alliances and solidarity networks with women groups.

Recognizing the importance of the Congress called “Towards a Gender-Sensitive Legislative Agenda for Development in the Americas”, held by the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas in Bogotá, Colombia on 20-21 November, 2008, the Plenary Assembly recommends:

• Endorsing the recommendations adopted by parliamentarians gathered at the Congress “Towards a Gender-Sensitive Legislative Agenda for Development in the Americas”; and

• Inviting FIPA Member Parliaments to report on progress made in the implementation of these recommendations at the next Plenary Meeting of FIPA.
In the past few days we have celebrated the first displays of our people's rebellion and love for freedom. Quito, the Light of the Americas, finds the raison d'être for its national constitution in the liberation exploiting dating back some two hundred years. From this space of dignity and love to this great Motherland, the new continent, may I warmly welcome you all and wish that our work present us with significant challenges in the struggle we still face within each of our countries and peoples.

Even today, six out of every ten women suffer from systematic intra-family violence in Ecuador. And if we believe there are many forms of violence, then the figures multiply due to the abuse suffered by women at their work or study places. These figures are repeated here and elsewhere and leave us with the following question: How much have we actually progressed in the pursuit of our rights? What good is any type of power to us if it is not to rescue and make us into subjects full with rights, respect and dignity?

The burqa, as has been rightly said, is not only an ancient Muslim custom, but a fabric prison which limits vision and movement and which captures the gaze and the body. It is a latrice... Many Afghan women turn to suicide in the pursuit of the peace of the grave rather than being subjected – on account of unrecognizable “violations” – to lapidation, amputation, flagellation or public executions. It is these same women who are unconceivable “violations” – to laceration, amputation, flagellation or public executions. It is these same women who are without rights to their spouses' assets when they die, regardless of whether or not their marriage is recognized by law.

Do they not feel duly represented in their parliaments, and perhaps do not feel duly represented in their parliaments, and too frequently this sentiment is extended to those women’s collectives who suffer discrimination twice as much. The richness demands of us greater efforts for recognition, as well as the constitutional and democratic balance of national legislations; we shall assess all positive experiences which favour women’s participations and we shall not disregard the great intercultural diversity of our countries.

This must be the opportunity to empower us, and for this reason we have come up with topics which relate to the experiences women politicians have had. Just to mention only a number of the many topics that bring us together and which we hope are important tools, we shall attempt to establish a critical balance of national legislations; we shall assess all positive actions which favour women's participations and we shall not disregard the great intercultural diversity of our countries.

We will pay special attention during this meeting to the experiences of the distinguished speakers here. Let me also take this opportunity to thank the financial support provided by the Canadian Agency for International Development, as well as the Honourable Municipality of the Metropolitan District of Quito, the Canada-based Kinross-Aurealian Company, UNIFEM and the Parliamentarian Group for Women's Rights of the National Assembly of Ecuador, in organizing this event.

It is not only in far away lands where such prisons exist, however. This is why the stance that women have taken, that of claiming for their rights persists in today's world as a key to democracy and to the respect for human rights, even more so when the agenda of this meeting relates to women in power or the fact that these women have already conquered. What good are they? Why do we work from the positions of power we have attained?

It is equally imperative to re-examine key concepts such as equality or the principle of equality within a democratic society. Have we really overcome discrimination? Is the political participation of women respected under equal conditions? In this many cases, it seems to us the presence of representatives from different peoples and human collectives who perhaps do not feel duly represented in their parliaments, and too frequently this sentiment is extended to those women’s collectives who suffer discrimination twice as much. The richness of the Americas is represented here, and this ethnic and cultural richness demands of us greater efforts for recognition, as well as challenges for development.

All this poses some direct questions to us, women parliamentarians, in each of our countries: Whom do we serve? Whom do we work for? How often do we give priority to women's claims, especially of those who live under conditions of vulnerability, if not invisibility? But also, men of conscience, sensitivity and commitment can no longer be the exception when it comes to our work present us with significant challenges in the struggle we still face within each of our countries and peoples.

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In other latitudes, and under other circumstances, it would probably be impossible to even think of the agenda prepared for this meeting. We can weigh up this small satisfaction; however, all will have proven useless if you do not leave here with your suitcases filled with the new challenges that certain spaces of power present us with, renewed with revised roles and with a different approach as to how to exercise them, thus claiming responsibility for all that we women do right… and even, at times, beyond any possible improvement.

Let’s get to work!

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Let’s get to work!

Address by Architect Fernando Cordero Cueva, President of the National Assembly of Ecuador

**Against ‘machocracy’**

Edy Delcambre, one of the greatest thinkers at the beginning of the twentieth century and a founder of Sociology, was of the opinion that the gender difference lied in the proximity to the natural status. Durkheim affirmed that men would be more estranged from nature due to their commitment to science, to war, to politics, and this determined their identity as civilized individuals, who were better socialized, the product of the progress of culture and the consolidation of society.

Women, on the other hand, in Durkheim’s line of thinking, due to the fact that they remained linked to their reproductive nature, to the family and to child rearing, were the surplus of the status of nature. As can be easily inferred, Durkheim’s ideas still maintained the surplus of that age-old conception of a sexist and restrictive citizenship which was first seen in Ancient Greece and which, unfortunately, dominated western social thinking for centuries.

Reality is different now since it is irrefutable that the biological role women play continues to be superior to that of their male counterparts and, for this reason, it is an erroneous conception to think that the natural responsibility of women must become ‘more manageable’ through the processes of socialization and education, which allows dominant men to exert their coercive might over women.

These ideas surrounding the family, modesty, sexuality and love were conveyed to women from childhood, not only to reinforce...
their role as mothers and wives, but also to subordinate them to ‘machocracy’. Thus, much to the contrary of Durkheim’s ideas, it is women who are ‘socialized’, it is you who on account of the ontological conformation of your gender, exert a determinant social influence.

It is for these reasons that the inveterate and unjust subordination of women, the sexist and the extreme poverty of our ancestral peoples, as in terms of the influence the October Revolution had, which located the economic and social claims of urban and rural workers at the core of all political and social struggles.

The women’s movement, the women’s movement which we have those related to gender.

It is for these reasons that the inveterate and unjust subordination of women, the sexism to the detriment of women’s dignity, the extent of their participation in the revolutionary processes, the absence of women in the struggle for political power, their role as mothers and wives, but also to subordinate them to the influence of men.

For the Rights of Women

The First Women in the Mexico City, the First Women in the Americas, and throughout the world, who join the struggle to transform reality, the open political struggle, convinced of the error of politics, ever so masculine and excluding, which prevented women from being present, or simply, from exercising this right.

Clear signs are the presence of an ever increasing number of women at the National Assembly or in the highest positions of power.

Countries in Latin America are all prolific in women who fight for their emancipation and the emancipation of all. In Bolivia, beyond feminism, Domitila Chungara, the daughter of miners, in Potosí, also illiterate in her early life like Dolores Cacuango, stood up for her postponed rights, to be subordinated to others from men’s feet to be subordinated to others, on their heads to be over and above others. Domitila teaches us that woman was created by a man’s ribs to be his mate in life and in his struggle.

It is she who taught us that if we want to free ourselves, transform the world and make inroads, we must overcome the prejudices of politics, ever so masculine and excluding, which prevented women from being present, or simply, from exercising this right.

Clear signs are the presence of an ever increasing number of women in the most important decision-making processes to build a better future for our nations, even in the highest levels of power: Michelle Bachelet in Chile or Laura Chinchilla in Costa Rica, are all perfect examples of this.

The political history of Ecuador, like that of other countries in the Americas, does not yet herald the good news of Chile or Costa Rica, but indeed speaks of the ever increasing presence of women in politics. It speaks to us of the right path we have embarked ourselves in, or in our pursuit to eliminate the very prejudices of politics, ever so masculine and excluding, which prevented women from being present, or simply, from exercising this right.

For this reality to further deepen in the country and in all countries across the Americas, we are certain that of particular significance is the present meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas, under the auspices of the National Assembly of Ecuador, in which women parliamentarians will:
Ecuador demonstrates its interest in strengthening the role of women in parliaments in the Americas. This attitude highlights the vision and the commitment this country has in matters which have been often ignored.

The Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, which is part of the FIPA, was established in 2003 with the purpose of strengthening the role of women involved in politics, as well as their democratic participation in the continent, in order to foster equality between men and women. The President of this FIPA pillar is also a member of our Executive Committee. She leads the work of our forum to make inroads into our cause, a matter to which we give increasing attention.

We meet this week because we must strengthen the role of women in society. Despite all efforts made by countries in our region, we must continue to advance, support and demonstrate new ways of working in the field of politics. Unlike men, we cannot approach politics in the same manner they do. Reinforcing the role of women in politics means much more than having full access and complete political representation. We must change and improve politics in general, so that it can also represent our values and our priorities. These changes will reflect our own particular way of seeing power.

Traditionally, power was something which one accumulated. Women were denied power and, thus, we understood the situation of everyone who lacks power in society: Children, youth, the poor and the elderly, are all major social sectors who lack power and are often forgotten.

Palabras de la Senadora Céline Hervieux-Payette
Comité Ejecutivo - FIPA
Women think of power as a means to serving society. That is, power must be used and shared for the benefit of those who have traditionally lacked it. For this reason, women must be present in the world of politics to deal with matters which men do not see to.

We are also meeting in this beautiful National Assembly because Ecuador is a leading country in terms of the progress it has made for women in parliamentary life. Women’s representation in the Canadian Senate is very similar to that of the National Assembly of Ecuador. And it is approximately ten per cent higher than that in the House of Commons in Canada. However, what makes Ecuador stand out is the legislative guarantee of a minimum representation in the hands of women, in which ethnic and cultural representation is taken into account and which is increased by five per cent in each general election until representative parity is achieved. This legislation is highly progressive and audacious given the current power structure. But for women it represents smart politics.

For the current structure of power, equality of representation may be sufficient – perhaps more than sufficient. But, as we begin. Following this, we must implement policies and which is increased by five per cent in each general election until representative parity is achieved. This legislation is highly progressive and audacious given the current power structure. But for women it represents smart politics.

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For UNIFEM-Andean Region it is a high honour, and a welcome opportunity, to address you all at this opening session of this important meeting of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, an event which highlights the importance of the opportunities to meet and debate for people like you, who are working in the field of parliamentary politics, as women citizens in the exercise of power who approach significant challenges, as evidenced by the name chosen for this meeting.

The different levels of access for women to be elected as parliamentarians have seen an increase over the last few years in Latin America. Undoubtedly the laws which enshrine affirmative action measures to help promote candidates have been a clear contribution to this achievement.

In this regard, it is therefore important to ask ourselves to what extent democracy has been strengthened thanks to the increased presence of women. Representation has certainly diversified to include issues not previously present in the interests of politicians. Perhaps some scientists, politicians, and not as an exception to the rule but rather as an event that is naturally accepted.

This shift presupposes, without a doubt, a transformation that is engrained in a democratizing paradigm. Nonetheless, when it comes to facing the responsibilities of both men and women, politics is greatly felt. Experience shows that the women involved in politics are those who do not have any family responsibilities, be it because they have no children or because these children are now grown-ups; in some instances, and precisely because they have children, they continue to exercise their organising and monitoring role within the family, an additional emotional burden to that experienced by any ordinary male politician. This is here where personal cost for women who are involved in politics is engraved in a democratizing paradigm. Nonetheless, when it comes to facing the responsibilities of both men and women, politics is greatly felt. Experience shows that the women involved in politics are those who do not have any family responsibilities, be it because they have no children or because these children are now grown-ups; in some instances, and precisely because they have children, they continue to exercise their organising and monitoring role within the family, an additional emotional burden to that experienced by any ordinary male politician. This is here where personal cost for women who are involved in politics.
However, there is a lesser (or less documented) presence of women in the area of supervision, another key role of parliaments, and which gains greater importance within the aforementioned presidentialist context. This could be better expanded to monitor national public policies, both those which are specific to women and which arise from specialist mechanisms available in the majority of States, as well as those from the ministries or other public powers, and which have a direct impact on the life of women. Perhaps it is here, in the area of supervision, where there are many challenges to think of, many strategies to be shared in relation to how to make the best use of supervisory functions, by implementing a watchful eye—that of gender—over the whole set of public actions undertaken by our States.

In short, there are many issues for debate and enrichment. We are certain that this event will provide a significant space for exchange and learning. From UNIFEM-RA we hope this is the case and that the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas may emerge from this meeting with renewed strength.

New situations also call for new strategies for action which maximise internal alliances amongst political parties and movements in order to increase the strength of the various currents of opinion, which presupposes new skills by female political actors such as women parliamentarians, so as not to give up their positions or their political ethics in the inter-partisan game and so as not to deviate from the aims and goals that led them to their highly representative positions. In turn, it also implies the need to strengthen alliances and the ongoing relationship with other male and female stakeholders outside the parliaments, so that the institutional weakening likely to be experienced by Congresses can be mitigated insofar as they manage to genuinely express societal demands and aspirations.

When revisiting the not so short track record of women in Latin American parliaments, we see that it is indeed quite prolific in the presentation of bills and legal reforms in areas such as violence against women, political equality and/or parity, health and education, but also in the legislative contexts at large, which range from economic to environmental issues, from social security to the security of citizens, for we women are incorporated into all areas of parliamentary work, and not only into those linked to social issues identified as a source of our concerns.

In short, there are many issues for debate and enrichment. We are certain that this event will provide a significant space for exchange and learning. From UNIFEM-RA we hope this is the case and that the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas may emerge from this meeting with renewed strength.
Some Thoughts on the Human Rights of Women across National Legislations in the Americas

Ms. Roxana Arroyo
ILAND RESEARCHER, SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA

From this perspective, the new social order must be focused on the construction of legislations that are pro women’s human rights, which also sustain the construction of a new social paradigm, based on the conjunction of substantive equality and formal equality, in which the gender perspective is the spinal cord; this will lead to overcoming historical boundaries in order to move towards the construction of a true democratic state. To do this, one must combat discrimination and gender violence through the implementation of conventional and non-conventional instruments, including:

- The International legislation that is part of the internal order: the Declaration on the elimination of violence against women; the Convention for the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women – CEDAW; the Inter-American Convention to prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women (Belém Do Pará).
- Special measures of a temporary nature: Mechanisms that have a greater incidence in the fight against discrimination. These promote equality and constitute social and political instruments for democratization. These instruments have enabled the development of changes in the legal domain, with a call on the States to seek the elimination of violence against women and the inclusion in their legal systems of specific instruments for democratization.
- These instruments for democratization are focused on the construction of legislations that are pro women’s human rights, which also sustain the construction of a new social paradigm, based on the conjunction of substantive equality and formal equality, in which the gender perspective is the spinal cord; this will lead to overcoming historical boundaries in order to move towards the construction of a true democratic state. To do this, one must combat discrimination and gender violence through the implementation of conventional and non-conventional instruments, including:

National Constitutions

Pais | Últimos reformas, artículos pertinentes | Tematicas
--- | --- | ---
Cuba | Amended in 1992, Chapter IV | Equality,
Argentina | 1994 Reform; Section 37 | Recognition of women’s human rights and standing of the CEDAW Convention,
Uruguay | 1997 Constitution, Sections 7, 8, 54 and 74 | Equality and non-discrimination,
Ecuador | New text of 2008. Section 9 | Secular State,
Nicaragua | Section 48 | Equality and effective participation.

Other topics included in the report are:
- Indigenous women’s rights and inclusion.
- Rights of pregnant women.
- Indigenous women’s rights and inclusion.
- Secular State.
- Non discrimination and equality.
- Education.
- Rights of pregnant women.
- Miscellaneous rights.

These instruments have enabled the development of changes in the legal domain, with a call on the States to seek the elimination of violence against women and the inclusion in their legal systems of specific instruments for democratization. Further, the incorporation of concepts such as citizenship and democracy has been made possible thanks to these instruments, thus contributing to the democratization of power and to the recognition of women as social and political subjects. Undoubtedly, in constructing a participatory democracy parliaments must better represent the interests of each gender and include the needs of women, by virtue of the fact that equality and non discrimination can only be attained if the demands and interests of social diversity are to be included.

Regulatory changes in favour of women in the Americas and the Caribbean are reflected at the following levels:

1. Lafayette, lawyer, and human rights activist.
2. An active member of the Feminist Movement in Latin America, she has been participating in struggles at a national, regional, and international level to advocate for women’s human rights.
4. Permanent consultant for the Program for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, ILANUD.
5. Visiting Professor at FLACSO – Ecuador.
6. Visiting Professor at the Master’s Degree in Women’s Studies, Universidad de Costa Rica and Universidad Nacional.
7. Has written several articles, research papers, and a book focused on women’s human rights, discrimination, and violence.
8. Has participated in talks, conferences, and seminars in Latin America.
9. Conducts research into violence and discrimination issues.
10. Has written several articles, research papers, and a book on women’s human rights, discrimination, and violence.

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Legislating on Violence against Women

There are four areas in which the majority of legislations have undergone legislative changes in order to contribute to the eradication of gender violence (family and sexual violence):

- Domestic violence (intra-family violence). Its majority enactment in the region dates back to the period between 1994-1998, and it is based on two models:
  1) Laws of Mixed Nature and
  2) Partial reforms to Penal Codes.
- Sexual harassment (fields of education and work)
- Gender violence
- Sexual violence (criminal field)

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<th>Country</th>
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<td>Peru</td>
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<td>Brazil</td>
<td>María da Penha Law</td>
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<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Regulations on awareness, prevention and punishment of forms of</td>
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<td>violence and discrimination against women.</td>
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<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>Law against femicide and other forms of violence against women</td>
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<td>(Executive Order No. 22-2008)</td>
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<td>Argentina</td>
<td>Law on Comprehensive Protection to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate</td>
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<td>Violence against Women in the area of Interpersonal Affairs.</td>
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<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>Draft Bill on Violence</td>
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<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>Law on Criminalization of Violence against Women (Law 8589)</td>
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n relation to the sexual and reproductive rights, States have still a long way to go. Mainly, they must commit to ensure that these rights:

- Are accepted and acknowledged as human rights.
- Are accepted and acknowledged by States, and, therefore, that States take on responsibility and guarantee them to the population, with due consideration to their specific needs.
- Are taken into account in broader-scope legislation, and that greater visibility is ascribed to the diversity of subjects.

Legislating in favour of sexual rights and reproductive rights of women

“The human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.”

(Brave New Women – 1990)

Sexual education has been included in the curricula in eleven countries in the region: The Bahamas, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Puerto Rico.

Final Remarks

1. Currently we cannot discuss democracy if democracy excludes the principle of substantive equality and real equality; it is imperative that the review of women’s human rights be considered as benchmarks to measure government actions and their compliance with international obligations.

2. Women’s human rights must be included within the ethical-legal framework constructed with a gender perspective, in order to form the new constitutional regulations.

3. The production of legislation must respond to the paradigm of the principle of substantive/real equality, one that takes into consideration the interests of women within their specific realities.

4. The production of legislation must directly contribute to the construction of a culture that is based on the respect for and the promotion of human rights, to which end it must be focused on the eradication of violence and discrimination against women on account of their gender.

5. Discrimination and violence against women on account of their gender constitute a flagrant violation against human rights and, thus, are priority issues for the drafting of legislation which does not pertain to women alone but they are a matter in the construction of democracy.

6. The drafting of legislation must be ruled by the parameters of a secular State.

7. The repercussions of a dichotomy position in the drafting of legislation, when this may be due to neoliberal policies, directly impacts on the ability to guarantee the principle of equality and non discrimination, and the right of women to live a life free from violence.

8. It is necessary to enrich the right to substantive equality, as established in the CEDAW Convention; the right to live a life free from violence, in accordance with the Belém Do Pará Convention.

9. Special measures, of a temporary nature, must be considered as a means to achieving substantive equality, which enables a dignified life for women, in their diversities.

10. Better legislation is thus imperative to guarantee sexual and reproductive rights.

REGULATIONS ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Country Regulations on sexual and reproductive rights
Argentina Constitution
Brazil Policy on sexual and reproductive rights
Colombia Law on Equality relating to Health and Accessibility
Costa Rica Decree on the Protection of Sexual and Reproductive Rights
Honduras Law on Equality
Ecuador Political Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador
Nicaragua General Health Code
Paraguay Municipal Ordinance of Asunción
Dominican Republic National Regulation on Reproductive Health
Uruguay National Plan on Equality, Chapter on Sexual and Reproductive Rights
Venezuela Constitution

Argentina Regulations on sexual and reproductive rights

Argentina Constitution

Brazil Policy on sexual and reproductive rights

Colombia Law on Equality relating to Health and Accessibility

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Ecuador Political Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador

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Paraguay Municipal Ordinance of Asunción

Dominican Republic National Regulation on Reproductive Health

Uruguay National Plan on Equality, Chapter on Sexual and Reproductive Rights

Venezuela Constitution
Exercising power: the experience of a woman politician

Enó Uragña, FEDERAL DEPUTY IN THE MEXICAN CONGRESS

I have been invited to discuss my personal experience in the exercise of power, which compels me to also talk about the experience of the marginal position from which I have been involved in political activism. However, do not be misled to assume that I will not acknowledge that I have indeed sought and fought for occupying power spaces. In fact, I must actually confess that I am not afraid of exercising power. It is a matter of having it clear what power is for, what we want it for, what we are going to do with it, what is the reading we women make of political power, and how we define political work – not only in relation to the exercise commonly done by men, but amongst us women ourselves.

The parliamentary group, with which I am aligned, was informed of the decision not to discuss this issue, to which I opposed, and a national media debate, since initially they tried to replace male alternate. In joint consensus with all the parties, it was agreed upon that this ‘formality’ would be done with discretion, namely, the parity system by men legislators. That is, in the majority of parliaments, they turned to the leave trick to pass on the seat to the male alternate. A national media debate, since initially they tried to replace male alternate. The trick that tried to legitimise Exclusion from other parties who, although they shared this indignation, were at first hesitant since they claimed that they were not in a particular case, the agenda has always featured over and above the interests we came up with a strong debate which finally became a national media debate, since initially they tried to replace male alternate. I immediately sought other allied women of Deputies (2009 – 2012) of Merit. Gay Award representation positions.

The disdain with which men politicians regarded the issue and the relevance of the quota system to women citizens. The very representative, that is, we discharge our duties in Parliaments but rather at all women, since their individual office-bearing is not on our own behalf but on behalf of our collective rights and on account of a policy of citizen empowerment. The disdain with which men politicians regarded the issue and the relevance of the quota system to women citizens. The very representative, that is, we discharge our duties in Parliaments but rather at all women, since their individual office-bearing is not on our own behalf but on behalf of our collective rights and on account of a policy of citizen empowerment.

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architecture, the size and even the very rules within parlia-
ments, favour or hinder—as much as electoral procedures do—
the expression of groups which claim to represent women. This is the invention of
the parties always find a way to bypass the law to mock our
cultural norms, commonly known as gender quotas, which
we have fought so hard to get going.

"A woman's body is no guarantee"

As far as my country is concerned, there is a true sense of
discouragement with the results of democracy in net terms of
greater equality for all people, especially for women, which
hinders the advancement of our political participation, particularly
when we are faced with a climate of violence and insecurity. For
example, the expectation to comply with the Millennium Goals
under these conditions (as far as it relates to greater political
representation of women) is seriously diminished.

The current federal legislature in Mexico includes 74.2% of
men and 25.8% of women, that is, below the 30% as stipulated
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The group of the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD, as per
its Spanish acronym). The third force in the legislature and
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Without a doubt, similar attempts are repeated in other parlia-
mments and we must draw a comparison to present our opposi-
tion and demand the effective implementation of the gender
quota. In turn, we must also weigh not only quota procedures
but also the selection of candidates to become women legisla-
tors and, in general, to occupy all other popular or administra-
tive electoral posts, for we women are different and we experi-
ence other identity interests.

For decades feminists have been pointing out that "the body of
a woman is no guarantee" and I maintain that this is not even the case with the left because, often as a result of the
dependence of men on women, which is further out of line with the basic documents of
women, which is further out of line with the basic documents of
women, which is further out of line with the basic documents of
women, which is further out of line with the basic documents of
The former is a set of practices, whether written or otherwise, that distinguish between politics, what is political and public policies. In order to facilitate the analysis, one must make a triple distinction: women and politics, the “Political” and Public Policies.

The emerging issue is that of distinguishing between ‘progressive’ or ‘conservative’, but… In relation to what? Hence the need for our second definition, that is: the political; understood as that which something is beyond the daily and situational practice of those agents located in the public milieu, that sphere likely to narrow what must be the topic under analysis, dispute or debate. Under such a context, one must wonder: How much has our agenda permeated through or positioned itself in the political arena?

The items in this agenda (sexual and reproductive rights, among others) are of such importance that they are at the root of the ‘cold war’ is that said political profiles have become diluted, and now both liberals and conservative alike can be classified within the social discourse. They are commonly split into left and right, although there is also a trend towards the emergence of an alleged centre that is all too frequently vague. Regardless of their self-adscription and which contribute to legitimising positions taken has the purpose of changing the order of social priorities because their liberation approaches give them a progressive character.

As a general rule, when women participate in politics they must choose between these poles. Those who choose the left do not always see themselves as feminists, although they assume that it is within that right that the most progressive and collective positions are found. In turn, those who opt for the right rather tend to place emphasis on the defence of individuals, but under conservative positions.

What is indeed certain is that part of the outcome of the end of the ‘cold war’ is that said political profiles have coalesced, and now both liberals and conservative alike can be grouped within the left or the right. However, feminism is a little apprehensive as a political movement, both in the left and the right, but could undoubtedly never be seen from conservative perspectives because their liberation approaches give them a progressive character.

The purpose of what is public is completely surrounded by what is political, and this facilitates correspondence with the male world. Women are taken to be the representatives of those agents located in the public milieu, that practice of those agents located in the public milieu, that sphere likely to narrow what must be the topic under analysis, dispute or debate. Under such a context, one must wonder: How much has our agenda permeated through or positioned itself in the political arena?

I insist that it is necessary to avail ourselves of solid mechanisms to ensure we take to Parliament the diverse demands of women, a basic pre-requisite to break with the old and discriminatory practices. The prejudice, institutionalised in the patriarchal system, prevents us from realising that the importance of the gender agenda cuts across the rest of what is political.

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distribution of workload that is done according to their obliga-
tions, are the instances whereby heterosexual relationships engage in an affective life in exchange for her political development. Very few women now are the ‘good woman politician’ and work three shifts or otherwise cancel out her professional life in order to take care of the household. It goes without saying here that a good woman politician must be ‘superwoman’. It is worth mentioning that in terms of women’s work in the public sector, the main challenge for the 21st century (as the slogan of the United Nations has it) is the recognition of the domestic space as a productive one. Without a doubt, for the exercise of power, of another form of power, the main challenge for the 21st century (as the slogan of the United Nations has it) is the recognition of the domestic space as a productive one. 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legislative proposal but we were nevertheless conscious of the fact that this work would take years to bear. For us all, men and women of all generation was driven by civil society organizations close to the LGBTI, but we also supported the various types of progressive voices in society which, thanks to a persistent articulation of their arguments and real life accounts in the media, managed to permeate into public discussions and spaces to generate a shift in the social perception and in political plurality.

We did significant work at the universities and from that space the issue emerged and we opened the debate over the different types of families that make up society and, although this may have seemed obvious, it had neither been parties nor the government to support the need for reforms that favour laws on violence against women, the issue appeared simply unapproachable and for lack of anti-discrimination and human rights laws. But we had to wait 7 years; we even had to wait for AMLO (who had been in the government since 2003) we managed to make significant progress in respect of anti-discrimination and human rights laws. And, above all, compelled to rethink the secularism which characterizes Mexico. Society did change. And we besieged the Government of the Federal District and mainly the Chief of Government Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), all three of them leftist by self-definition, had no intention to legislate in favour of the LGBTI population. It was therefore relevant to assume the need for reforms that favour laws on violence against women, human trafficking, against discrimination and for the legislative standardization, pursuant to international covenants on human rights.

Thus, we proposed a constitutional reform to make it explicit that the Mexican State, as well as being a representative, democratic and federal Republic, is secular. This republican characteristic is central to the demand of our civil rights and must be supported by further work towards a democratic framework where our political rights can prosper.

This constitutional reform has already been passed at the Chamber of Deputies and is awaiting confirmation by the Senate. In the same situation is a reform that gives international recognition to the rights currently denied to them due to the lack of legal recognition. On account of the so-called ‘greater good of the child’ and out of respect for our Constitution, these ministers will protect the rights of the children of lesbian and gay families to guarantee that they will decide in our favour. As deputies, and also in working for different organizations, we have maintained a close communication with the Minister, we bring to them diverse information and testimonials to help them familiarise themselves with the urgency of girls and boys who are the children of same sex couples gaining access to the rights currently denied to them due to the lack of legal recognition. On account of the so-called ‘greater good of the child’ and out of respect for our Constitution, these ministers will protect the rights of the children of lesbian and gay families to guarantee that they are also protected under the law.

What is central to this experience is that it was the civil society who went further than their own political parties’ agendas, promoted a greater social insertion in the legislative debate and, above all, compelled to rethink the secularism which characterizes Mexico. Society did change. And we besieged the legislative and federal government to make progress with other important pieces of legislation, such as the Law on the Identity of Transgender People.

We are as here attending this event, the Mexican Supreme Court has ruled that non-marriage for same-gender couples is a constitutional right not to be discriminated against. Thirdly, that we have a full constitutional right not to be discriminated against. Thirdly, that we have a full constitutional right to marry. And, above all, compelled to rethink the secularism which characterizes Mexico. Society did change. And we besieged the Government and the Federal Government Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), all three of them leftist by self-definition, had no intention to legislate in favour of the LGBTI population. It was therefore relevant to assume the need for reforms that favour laws on violence against women, human trafficking, against discrimination and for the legislative standardization, pursuant to international covenants on human rights.

We did significant work at the universities and from that space the issue emerged and we opened the debate over the different types of families that make up society and, although this may have seemed obvious, it had neither been parties nor the government to support the need for reforms that favour laws on violence against women, the issue appeared simply unapproachable and for lack of anti-discrimination and human rights laws. But we had to wait 7 years; we even had to wait for AMLO (who had been in the government since 2003) we managed to make significant progress in respect of anti-discrimination and human rights laws. And, above all, compelled to rethink the secularism which characterizes Mexico. Society did change. And we besieged the Government of the Federal District and mainly the Chief of Government Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), all three of them leftist by self-definition, had no intention to legislate in favour of the LGBTI population. It was therefore relevant to assume the need for reforms that favour laws on violence against women, human trafficking, against discrimination and for the legislative standardization, pursuant to international covenants on human rights.

Thus, we proposed a constitutional reform to make it explicit that the Mexican State, as well as being a representative, democratic and federal Republic, is secular. This republican characteristic is central to the demand of our civil rights and must be supported by further work towards a democratic framework where our political rights can prosper.

This constitutional reform has already been passed at the Chamber of Deputies and is awaiting confirmation by the Senate. In the same situation is a reform that gives international recognition to the rights currently denied to them due to the lack of legal recognition. On account of the so-called ‘greater good of the child’ and out of respect for our Constitution, these ministers will protect the rights of the children of lesbian and gay families to guarantee that they are also protected under the law.

Some ten years ago we would have not dared to say, amidst the festivities of the bicentennial, that we would be living this display of progress in the field of human rights.

I do not forget, not even for a second, the great power vested in the democratic movements that promise further work towards a democratic framework where our political rights can prosper.

The Constitution of 1917, which we are celebrating today, is the best example of what we have accomplished in the past. It is the best proof of what we can do in the present and future.
The emergence of social claims arising from the diver-
sity of identities calls for democracy to be based on new paragons. To speak of democracy in the true sense of the word, not only must the right to vote be guaranteed, but also multi-partisanship and permanent elections, as well as a full representation of the people, and the voice of women in particular. Hence parity must be seen as a right which ensures collective representativeness.

The participation of women in politics remains to be limited. Even when their representation in parliament has increased over the last decade, gender parity in political decision-making and in all other areas is still far from becoming a reality. The relationship that we women have with power continues to be a difficult one. Even though we have attained the recognition of the majority of our human rights as citizens, access to positions of power is, still today, an unassured matter.

Regarding proportional representation of gender, the political class must take on this responsibility. A responsible and representative leading class is one which plays the role of inter-
mediary and the conduit of societal demands and one which is accountable for its actions. Democratic representation implies that a political class must reflect the political, sociological and cultural characteristics of the society it represents. The re-
presentation of women, in their full diversity, as well as their participation in the decision-making process, from definition to implementation, continues to be a challenge for the political system in Guatemala, without which we cannot speak of a real and effective democracy.

We are in this new century faced with a change in the ways we conceive power. Nowadays, citizens require that we give that power legitimation, taken through democratic in the true sense of a ‘purpose’, and that very purpose is to generate benefits for the daily and concrete lives of people without any discrimination, with respect for differences, and with inclusiveness.

Equality can be either reflected in concrete public policies, in the laws, in Congress, in the media, in money, in power, or it can be lived ‘day by day’, in the streets and in the home, or else it is NOT equality. By strengthening women’s citizenship we attach a symbolic configuration, and because there must be coherence between what is private and what is public.

Democracy as well, because politics and the political have another quality to democracy, we afford it meaning, and I am not just speaking of representative democracy but of participa-
tory democracy as well, because politics and the political have a symbolic configuration, and because there must be coherent-
ence between what is private and what is public.

For the Rights of Women:

Otilia Lux de Cotti, DEPUTY, GUATEMALA

Guatemalan leader who has struggled relentlessly for the defence of indigeneous peoples’ rights in the social and political arena.

• Member of the Com-
mission for Historical Clarification, in charge of Investigating human rights violations during the 35-year civil war in Central America.

• 2002: Minister for Culture and Sports during Alfonso Portillo’s administration.

• 2004 – 2007: Member of the UK Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues; she also served on UNESCO’s Executive Board.

• Winner of the fifteenth edition of the Bartolomé de las Casas 2005 Award in recognition of her “permanent leadership and commitment to the defence of Indigenous peoples’ human rights”, established by the Spanish State Secretariat for Inter-
national Cooperation.

• 2007: Selected national deputy for the Encounter for Guatemala Party; in this position, she endorsed the passing of the Law against Femicide in April 2008.

• 2008: Decorated with the Law against Femicide by the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Health and the National Coordinating Committee of the Feminist Movement for the eradication of gender violence in Guatemala.

• Author of several publica-
tions on these issues.

• Advocate for the Maya cultural heritage.

• Speaker at several events and seminars related to women’s and indigenous peoples’ issues, women’s participation, human rights, and gender.

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• Llicenciada (B. A.) in Education Administration; educator, and teacher.

• Advocate for the Maya cultural heritage.

• Indigenous women’s human rights activist.

• Speaker at several events and seminars related to women’s and indigenous peoples’ issues, women’s participation, human rights, and gender.

• Author of several publica-
tions on these issues.

Challenges for the 21st Century

Political Experience from the Perspective of Ethnic Diversity
Guatemalan women have been traditionally excluded from all decision-making processes, and have limited access to electoral posts and public office in the daily work, as well as in the economic, political and cultural arenas in the country. The former have been and continue to be exercised almost exclusively by men, and this has hindered progress and women’s empowerment. Limited access by women to the various spheres of power restricts the possibility of transforming and democratising power, thus significantly reducing their ability to influence decisions related to public tasks.

Women’s political participation is one of the best opportunities to exercise democracy. The involvement of indigenous women in politics is a true act of heroism: if for any woman to reach parliament is a difficult feat, for an indigenous woman it is an odyssey, for we must overcome a greater number of cultural, economic and social setbacks.

Limitations to indigenous women’s involvement in decision-making positions

- Partisan system: Political parties still have a masculine view: exclusion of women prevents their democratisation and generates a lack of interest among women to participate.
- Limited financial resources: Always related to the anti-democratic nature of the funding of political activities.

- Double and triple work-shifts: This prevents the assumption of greater responsibilities demanding more time.
- Feminisation of poverty: Does not allow access by women to their independence, autonomy and participation in the collective decision-making process.
- Violations to civil and political rights which occur with great frequency due to the absence of civil registration or documentation, which also infringes their right to identity.

Challenges for the achievement of ethnic and gender equality in the political context

- Striking a balance between gender equality and a democratic perspective, on the basis of social equality. Actively participating and not occupying seats or public office without leaving an imprint.
- Formulating and adopting public policies which strengthen the position of indigenous women, transform society and recognise bi-culturalism and multi-ethnicity.
- Increasing the participation of a greater number of women, not only as candidates but also as voters.
- Promoting quotas for the purpose of fostering the inclusion of women in the public decision-making process, in view of the fact that:

  - We women make up half of the population, so under-representation harms the legitimacy of democratic institutions.

  - We women have particular interests, linked to our gender, which can only be politically represented by ourselves. In relation to indigenous matters, it is only indigenous women who can express and represent our specific needs.

  - The argument of difference, on its own, emphasizes that we women have distinctive life experiences and qualities which must be integrated into the political life.

  - The perspectives of role models indicate that women who manage to play a role in institutional politics could contribute to the erosion of sexist prejudices and to encouraging other women to follow in their steps.

  - Reforming the Electoral and Political Parties Law in order to break away with the hegemony of some sectors of power.

  - Training cadres of Mayan women politicians, capable of presenting a political alternative on the basis of equity principles and values, complementarity and harmony, in which men and women are co-creators of an intercultural democracy.
The Ancestral Nunavut People

The most important land claim process in the history of Canada took place with the creation of Nunavut, meaning “our land”, in 1999, as conceived as the homeland of the Inuit of Canada and acknowledged as the country’s newest territory. In Canada, the Inuit are represented by “Tapiriit Kanatami”, a national organization currently led by woman, Mary Simon. Nunavut is located in the northeast of the country and covers one fifth of the Canadian territory. Most of the population is made up of Inuit people, who speak the Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun dialect. There are 26 small communities mainly situated in coastal areas.

Women and minors account for nearly 70% of the Nunavut population; 39% is under 15, thus representing Canada’s youngest age group.

The Inuit people have nomadic roots. Production changes led to the rise of sedentary communities and to a new lifestyle and social structures, where everyone has an established role. The domestic space has traditionally been the women’s natural environment, while the public space has been the men’s domain. Women make decisions at home on how to bring up their children, how to cook and dress. Men, on the other hand, are in charge of tasks outside the home, like hunting. The sexual division of labour helped meet mutual survival needs; women are in charge of tasks inside the home, like cooking. The changes in Nunavut people’s lifestyle brought about a redefinition of some social and cultural patterns, especially for men, whereas the roles assigned to women remained unchanged: They had to continue looking after their homes, while the men, thanks to market developments, no longer had to go hunting or fishing to provide for their family’s livelihood but were integrated into the labour market.

Despite this contradiction, women have also benefited from these cultural changes and, according to statistical data, have accessed education and employment - 80% of students are women. Schooling of both men and women is however lower than in the rest of the country.

The Current Situation

Although the Nunavut people currently have the lowest female representation in Canada’s provincial legislatures, there are two women in the Legislative Assembly. One of them has reached the highest parliamentary authority, she is the only woman holding that position in Canada. Our second representative is the current Minister of Health, Leona Aglukkaq, an Inuk woman elected to that position in Canada. Our second representative is the current Minister of Health, Leona Aglukkaq, an Inuk woman.

Consensus is very important to the Inuit tradition and is reflected in the current Nunavut legislature. Prior to the creation of Nunavut, the ad hoc committee suggested that the first Legislative Assembly should have one man and one woman per constituency. Unfortunately, this proposal was rejected by the Nunavut population in a referendum held in 1997 (57% to 43%). Most of the population wanted to elect candidates based on their merits and not on government affirmative action policies.

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Despite this contradiction, women have also benefited from these cultural changes and, according to statistical data, have accessed education and employment - 80% of students are women. Schooling of both men and women is however lower than in the rest of the country.
The Nunavut government acknowledges the significance of achieving full and equal participation of women in the political arena, so that the voice of women may be heard in public policies, laws, and planning. It also understands the need of implementing special plans and programs for women's leadership development and for promoting their participation.

During 2008 and 2009, the government of Nunavut, in cooperation with the Nunavut Women's Council, the Nunavut Tunngavik and Qikiqtani Inuit Association, the Nunavut Arctic College, Nunavut women's organizations, and the federal governments are planning the Arnait Nipingita Leadership Summit aimed at supporting and empowering women's leadership initiatives in Nunavut.

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During 2008 and 2009, the government of Nunavut, in cooperation with the Women's Council, ran a series of electoral workshops in order to encourage their participation in the Iqaluit elections. The promotional material was afterwards used in other communities. Prior to being elected, Eva Aariak, currently the highest authority, participated in these workshops along with four women who had attended the 2009 workshop, and they all became involved in the elections and were elected to the municipal council.

At present, the Government of Nunavut, in cooperation with the Quillit Women's Council, the Nunavut Tunngavik and Qikiqtani Inuit Association, the Nunavut Arctic College, Nunavut women's organizations, and the federal governments are planning the Arnait Nipingita Leadership Summit aimed at supporting and empowering women's leadership initiatives in Nunavut. 

This process is intimately related to the emergence of private property, which made women become the property of men. 

• The recognition of women’s right to vote in Brazil (in 1932) goes back to a continuous struggle started before the Proclamation of the Republic in 1899:
  • 1910: Creation of the Women’s Republican Party.
  • 1922: Creation of the Federação Brasileira pelo Progresso Feminino aimed at denouncing the incomplete citizenship status of women in Brazil.
  • 1932: the female vote is approved in the Electoral Code of 1932; however, it was only under the 1946 Constitution that female vote became fully and unrestrictedly enforced.

Women’s Rights

The United Nations Organization – UN established a Decade for Women between 1975 and 1985. The opening event was the World Conference on Women held in Mexico and then in E C U A D O R

Women IN Power: CHALLENGES FOR THE 21st CENTURY

...
Copenhagen in 1980. The Decade ended with the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi.

The Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women – CEDAW was approved in 1979. At The World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993, women’s organizations and NGOs urged to declare the universality and indivisibility of human rights so as to include women. Human rights are conceived from the historical perspective of the construction of citizenship and equally, in a political context that requires the separation of Church and State. In this scenario of achievement of human rights and space for denunciation, the UN encouraged the organization of the following conferences: Rio de Janeiro (1992), Cairo (1994), Beijing (1995), Copenhagen (1995), and Durban (2001). At these meetings different women’s issues and demands were brought to the forefront. There is greater global awareness of the need to condemn domestic and family violence against women – CEDAW was approved in 1979. At The World Conference on Women in Nairobi.

The ‘90s was a period of neoliberal expansion throughout the Continent, which implied a step backward in several women’s rights victories, especially in the labour field. In the 2000s there is an increased debate on sexual and reproductive rights, and on sexual diversity as “new” human rights.

Brazil’s 1998 Constitution

The ‘90s saw the strengthening of the movement in Brazil through the Diretas Já, which marked a transition to a democratic model. In 1987, the women’s movement put great pressure on the National Constitutional Convention achieving key victories in the 1988 Federal Constitution.

• Creating spaces where young women may discuss the uniqueness of their generational status;
• Passing of the Family-Bag, Minha Casa and minha vida. The 'First National Conference of Brazilian Women, held in 2002, was a very relevant document containing a number of claims stemming from a decade of women’s political involvement in different areas of society life. The previous decade had seen the emergence of a movement fighting for democratization and women’s rights and equality, and against patriarchy and racism. Inequality still exists in Brazil; there is a deep inequality between men and women regarding access to spaces of public power. Of all Latin American and Caribbean countries, Brazil has the greatest imbalance in this respect. “Women only account for 8.9% of all senators and federal deputies.”

• Legislative reforms to achieve 50% of gender participation;

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• Creation of the Special Secretariat of Policies for Women with ministerial status accountable for formulating and implementing public policies for women.
• Holding two national conferences on policies for women, which were widely attended by people and women’s movements.
• Passing of the Maria da Penha Law (11340/2006) which condemned domestic and family violence against women; adjustment of the quota law to have 30% of women in party nominations, which should now be completed and not merely reserved, as happened in the past.
• In most welfare plans implemented by the current government, women figure as the main beneficiaries, such as in Family-bag, Minha Casa and minha vida.

The First National Conference of Brazilian Women, held in 2002, approved a Feminist Political Platform that would steer the movement’s actions and influence the general electoral process in 2002 (presidential, provincial governments, federal senate, and federal and provincial parliaments). Its major achievements included the following:

- • Strengthening the Consolidated Healthcare System (SUS in Spanish).
"Women only account for 8.9% of all senators in this respect.

- • Legislative reforms to achieve 50% of gender participation;
- • Securing resources for women’s political education and training in parties;
- • Strengthening participatory democracy by increasing mechanisms that facilitate access to power, and by providing gender, racial, and ethnic equality;
- • Strengthening civil society movements by increasing women’s participation in political decision-making spaces;
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Struggles of Women Parliamentarians in Brazil

Education. Struggle for the creation of daycare centers, for the quality of basic public education, for the expansion of public technical high school education and public further education, for raising the wage floor, for improving the working conditions of male and female teachers, and for funding public education.

Healthcare. Providing healthcare to women (sexual and reproductive rights), and strengthening the Consolidated Healthcare System (SUS in Spanish).

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The previous decade had seen the emergence of a movement fighting for democratization and women’s rights and equality, and against patriarchy and racism. Inequality still exists in Brazil; there is a deep inequality between men and women regarding access to spaces of public power. Of all Latin American and Caribbean countries, Brazil has the greatest imbalance in this respect. “Women only account for 8.9% of all senators and federal deputies.”

Assessment of a Decade: 2000-2010

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The funding women candidates. candidates of both genders, and complete the minimum 30% with in its by-laws the obligation to women, and to have established the only one to have held, in Party) is the oldest party in Brazil – PCdoB (Brazilian Communist Partido Comunista do Brasil).

They pay tribute to famous black people who had never been popular organizations.

Unfortunately, based on the data published by the Supreme Electoral Court, we have seen that most political parties have reached a maximum of 21%, on average. It is imperative to approve a political reform guaranteeing public funding for the adoption of a quota law. This law will ensure parity through a close list of candidates alternating between men and women, which will be guaranteed through party funds. Penalties will be imposed to those parties that violate the law.

The II National Plan of Policies on Women, an outcome of the I and II National Conference on Women’s Policies Equality and Respect for Diversity – The promotion of equality should be permeated by a focus on cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity, among others. It requires combating all kinds of inequalities through affirmative action policies and considering women’s experiences in the formulation, implementation, monitoring, and assessment of public policies.

Social Justice – This implies acknowledging the need to redistribute the resources and wealth produced by society and to endeavour to overcome the social inequality affecting women.

Universality of Policies – Full compliance with policies should be ensured in order to guarantee women’s access to social, political, economic, cultural, and environmental rights. The principle of universality should be reflected in permanent policies at all three government levels, characterized by the indivisible, comprehensive, and interconnected nature of rights, along with affirmative action policies, perceived as a necessary transition in the search for effective gender, racial, and ethnic equity and equality.

Social Control & Participation – Women’s involvement and participation in the formulation, implementation, and social control of public policies should be guaranteed.
Gender-oriented democracy: progress & setbacks

Anunziatta Valdez, FORMER ECUADOREAN DEPUTY AND THE PROMOTER OF THE QUOTA LAW

[Image]

Quota and parity in Ecuador

I will begin by mentioning some postulates of the so-called “Gender-Oriented Democracy”, which proposes “democratizing democracy,” and an organization based on equality among different people as a wide, revolutionary, and liberating proposal. In Ecuador, the political participation of Alfaro’s montoneras favored women’s access to family, education, and paid labour rights during his government. Citizen rights materialized in 1929 thanks to the lonely and resolute struggle of Matilde Hidalgo Navarro, the first suffragette, the first female member of a city council, the first Ecuadorean woman to graduate as a medical doctor, and the first woman deputy, although she was never allowed to take office.

The political marginality of Ecuadorean women continued until late in the 20th century, so much so that in 1984 women accounted for barely 4% in Ecuador’s Parliament.

Women’s wish to achieve full political participation became manifest at the end of the 20th century. For the 1998-2002 National Congress term, 17 women were appointed, that is 14% of all deputies. Some of us had spent long years fighting for women’s rights.

At the time, there was a National Congress Committee on Women, Children, Youth, and Family with the following features:

- It had the same hierarchy of all other committees.
- It had a strategic plan whereby all bills were discussed with wide citizen participation.

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- It had the same hierarchy of all other committees.
- It had a strategic plan whereby all bills were discussed with wide citizen participation.
• It was made up of seven (7) work subcommittees, accord-
ing to their scope of action.

During my period as deputy, the Women’s Subcommittee iden-
tified fifteen areas of action, and an equal number of working
groups were set up with the women’s movement. One of these
groups was the driving force behind the electoral law amend-
ment resulting in the so-called Quota Law. Its approval had wide
national support. Broad strategic alliances were forged with
the women’s movement, the National Women’s Council
(CONAMU, as per its Spanish acronym), and some UN agencies.

Quota Law

The contents of the Quota Law may be summarized as follows:

• An initial 30% of female candidates were established for
  lists of at-large candidates, which was increased by 5% in
each election until reaching 50%.
• It provided for an order in the lists, i.e., alternate and
  sequential, between male and female candidates.
• It stipulates ethnic-cultural participation.
• It establishes the vote broken down by sex.
• It provides for an order in the lists, i.e., alternate and
  sequential, between male and female candidates.
• It requires the Supreme Electoral Court (today’s National
  Electoral Council) to train citizens and political parties in
gender issues.

All of us who have fought for the passing and adoption of the
Quota Law did so in the pursuit of the acknowledgement of
a right, of the possibility of being elected to a government
post on the same terms as men. In this sense, it is the same
struggle shared by the suffragettes a century before who had
fought to win the right to vote. The decision of whom to vote
for corresponds to each voter’s choice, but it also depends
on the political parties’ promotion of their female candidates.

There is no doubt that a greater participation of women in
popularly elected posts or in decision-making positions
succeeded in influencing contemporary culture to the extent
that it is almost “natural” to apply parity and equality between
sexes in power positions in the public sector. For instance,
women, as they are able to deliberate regardless of their gen-
der, effectively contributes to overcoming discrimination against
women, and their participation on the same terms as men.

The struggle for female participation helps create a different
social imaginary regarding women: They are rebellious and
autonomous. The Ecuadorian experience shows that we have
succeeded in influencing contemporary culture to the extent
that it is almost “natural” to apply parity and equality between
sexes in power positions in the public sector. For instance, 39% of
women were elected for the 2008 National Constitutional
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However, the above achievements are the outcome of many
years of struggle by organized women seeking compliance
with the Quota Law, which is paradigmatic and reveals the
extent to which women’s rights were openly violated in front of
the country’s political and legal institutions, which did noth-
ing in return.

Between 2000 and 2007, and with the law already in force, the
Supreme Electoral Court interfered with a series of
“guidelines” or “regulations” that deviously interpreted
the meaning of “alternation” and “sequencing” regarding
the location of male and female candidate positions, and
favoured male candidates by skipping two, three, or more
positions and ignoring the basic notion of alternation. All this
was done in complicity with the political parties or move-
ments making up the Court. Furthermore, several attempts
were made at the National Congress to amend or revoke the
law. The women parliamentarians, together with the wom-
en’s movement, pursued political and legal actions in their
defence, namely:

• Unconstitutionality claims
• Request for impeachment
• Administrative proceedings
• Electoral remedies: Petition for reinstatement / challenging
  / appealing / complaining
• Request for prosecution of Supreme Electoral Court mem-
  bers on a charge of breach of public duty

The law established how alternation and sequencing should be
implemented. The lists of at-large candidates had to include at
least 30% of women for the main posts and 30% for alternate
positions. The alternation and sequencing in the presentation of
lists had to follow an odd or even number order; the notion of
sequencing was understood as the series of possible combina-
tions on the list. In the case of candidates for three to five posi-
tions, one or two places were skipped, for six or more positions,
two or three places were skipped, and so on.

• Complaint against the Ecuadorian State before the Inter-
  American Commission on Human Rights
• Citizen oversight of the Supreme Electoral Court and Pro-
  vincial Electoral Courts
• Militant women’s oversight of political parties
• Lobbying with men and women deputies, the media, and
  observer missions
• Review of lists at a national and provincial level by wom-
  en’s oversight groups
• Manual system for checking lists by women’s oversight
  groups and Supreme Electoral Court staff
• List checking software
• Forms for list registration and challenging

General Electoral Law Regulations, March 2000

The law established how alternation and sequencing should be
implemented. The lists of at-large candidates had to include at
least 30% of women for the main posts and 30% for alternate
positions. The alternation and sequencing in the presentation of
lists had to follow an odd or even number order; the notion of
sequencing was understood as the series of possible combina-
tions on the list. In the case of candidates for three to five posi-
tions, one or two places were skipped, for six or more positions,
two or three places were skipped, and so on.
The Struggle to Enforce the Quota Law

As a result of the great pressure exerted by women’s organizations, the Constitutional Court issued Resolution No. 028-2002 ordering the Supreme Electoral Court to abide by the following decision in future:

...the challenged article defines alternation and sequencing; however, the content of such definitions does not guarantee equal participation of men and women, less still because, when referring to sequencing, it regulates the series of possible combinations, which is an affront to the equality of conditions as it stipulates that a woman could be placed on the ballot after the inclusion of two or three men.

However, the Supreme Electoral Court did not abide by the Constitutional Court’s decision in the elections of 2002, 2004, and 2006, and turned to a series of tricks just upon closing the registration of candidacies. From 2000 to 2007, following the resolve struggle of women and the country’s institutional crisis that led to the removal of 51 male and female deputies, elections were called to appoint the new assembly members. On May 23, 2007, the Supreme Electoral Court, through Resolution PLE-TSE/-23-5-2007, finally resolved:

Article 41.- Representation Formula - According to the representation formula of gender equality, the candidate registration process shall feature a man-woman or vice versa, with gender equality between main and alternate candidates, and keeping alternation and sequencing between candidates.
Quota Law Outcomes

- It contributed to the incorporation of other groups which have been traditionally excluded or of others which have been organized only recently: Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, environmental groups, urban-marginal movements, to name a few.
- It allowed 35% of women to be elected as members of the National Constitutional Convention;
- It allowed a large number of female members of the National Constitution Convention to be democratically elected.

Quota Law Limitations

- Quotas only relate to a part of the electoral system, i.e., the list of at-large candidates, and fail to include designated positions.
- There are no instruments to guarantee that women hold the top slots on the lists.
- There are no instruments to guarantee equal distribution of electoral publicity.

Parity Benefits

- Parity does not only relate to numerical equality but to a set of elements that provide for the exercise of the right to participate while enjoying equality before the law, equal opportunities, equal treatment, and true equality.
- It implies political affiliation and opportunities to develop a political career in political organizations.
The list of at-large candidates shall observe female participation in an alternate and sequential way. The State shall adopt affirmative action measures to guarantee the participation of discriminated sectors.

Conclusions

The Quota Law and the struggle for its approval and enforcement led to a path of no return, which has not only influenced the legal rule but has also had an impact on collective consciousness, thus creating new paradigms; we are happy to have been part of a process that is helping change history for women and for our country.

It comprises equal participation in all public institutions, either as a result of elections or not. It generates a political culture that permeates the private and social spheres.

Quotas and Parity in the New Constitution

The Constitution in force has introduced gender equality as part of its text, and it acknowledges parity and quotas in political participation, with alternation and sequencing. Article 65 stipulates that the State shall promote equal representation of men and women in nominated or designated positions in the public administration, at management and decision-making levels, as well as in political parties and movements.

The new wording acknowledges equal participation of men and women under equal conditions, regarding both their fundamental and political rights. This is a crucial step toward the inclusion of the gender perspective in the new laws, as well as toward women’s participation in the domestic and public and political spheres.

The Constitution stipulates a priority order for organic laws, and a deadline of 180 days was set for these laws to be passed following the start of the new parliamentary term. It is important to acknowledge the efforts made by the Plurinational Legislative Assembly in introducing gender equality in these five fundamental laws, but even more so the affirmative actions undertaken to improve women’s participation in the political sphere.

The Republic of Bolivia adopts a participatory, representative, and communal democratic form of government, with equal conditions between men and women.”

Bolivian Constitution, Article 11

The 17th Political Constitution of the State was approved in a referendum on 25 January 2009 by over 64% of male and female voters. It is the first time that such an important document is drafted by a Constitutional Convention convened by law and representing all sectors of Bolivia. It is the outcome of a protracted struggle by different social movements, indigenous peoples, and women, who for more than fifteen years have fought to have their specific rights included in the Constitution.

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Inclusion of the gender perspective in the five organic laws of the pluriethnic state of Bolivia

Deputy Cecilia Ayllón Quinteros, President of the Plural Justice Committee, Ministry of Legal Defense of the State (Bolivia)

Introduced by Deputy Marisenda Paz Duran (Bolivia)

- Holds master’s degrees in Administration of Justice (Universidad San Francisco Javier de Chuquisaca - Instituto de la Judicatura de Bolivia), and in Further Education (Universidad Militar de las Fuerzas Armadas)
- Specialist in scientific research.
- Practicing attorney with two postgraduate diplomas: Criminal Procedure Law and Economic Criminal Law
- National Deputy.
- President of the Committee on Plural Justice, Public Ministry, and State Legal Defence.
- Judge at Sentencing Court No. 4.
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PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN

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Executive and the Electoral Body, and it acts on the basis of independence, separation, coordination, and cooperation.

It respects interculturality and gender equality in the nomination and pre-selection of candidates for the Supreme Court and the Agro-Environmental Court, with the new provision that half of the pre-qualified candidates should be women.

For the election of male and female Magistrates, the Plurinational Legislative Assembly will select up to six (6) candidates for each department, in two separate lists of men and women, guaranteeing that 50% of the selected candidates are women.

If the selected candidate is a man, the most voted woman on his list will be the alternate magistrate. If the selected candidate is a woman, the most voted man on her list will be the alternate magistrate. If any of the alternate magistrates resigns, one of the remaining candidates on the lists will be summoned, while respecting the order of precedence and alternation between men and women.

The male and female regular voting members of the Departmental Courts of Justice are elected by the Supreme Court by a majority vote of half-plus-one of the members present, based on the lists submitted by the Consejo de la Magistratura (Magistrates’ Council). The Supreme Court shall guarantee that fifty per cent of the magistrates chosen are women.

It should be noted that all selection processes will respect the order of precedence and alternation between men and women, and that non-compliance with the obligation to verify and guar-antee the principles of equality, parity, and alternation between men and women on the lists of male and female candidates throughout the electoral process stages is considered to be a serious offence under the law.

1. Electoral System Law:

It includes equality and equity among the principles of inter-cultural democracy. It is based on legal plurality and pluralism, direct and participatory democracy, representative democracy, and communitarian democracy in the Plurinational State of Bolivia. One of the principles introduced is Equality. Bolivian democracy is based on gender equality and equal opportunities for men and women in the exercise of their individual and collective rights, by applying parity and alternation in the lists of male and female candidates for all government and representation positions, in the internal election of leaders and candidates in political organizations, and in indigenous, peasant peoples’ and nations’ own rules and procedures.

The chapter on Citizenship and Political Rights provides that the Plurinational State should guarantee the comprehensive, free, and equal exercise of rights established by the Political Constitution of the State to Bolivian men and women, without any discrimination whatsoever, where all men and women have the right to participate freely, either individually or collectively, in the development, exercise, and control of public power, either directly or through their representatives.

Bolivia’s intercultural democracy guarantees gender equality and equal opportunities between men and women.

2. Plurinational Constitutional Law

The wording of the law highlights the use of non-sexist language and introduces the principle of gender equality, whereby the freedoms and rights of men and women are guaranteed as stipulated by the Political Constitution of the State to Bolivian men and women, without any discrimination whatsoever, where all men and women have the right to participate freely, either individually or collectively, in the development, exercise, and control of public power, either directly or through their representatives.
The autonomous territorial units shall adopt a participatory, gender sensitive, and communitarian democratic form of governance. The principles of equity and equal opportunities is introduced as a goal of the System of Autonomies, thus guaranteeing people's participation within a framework of fiscal transparency and good living as the paramount goal of the Plurinational State. It is necessary to underscore the significance of having a Political Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia that may cause the gender approach to crosscut all policies and acknowledge women’s specific rights, but with Assembly members and part of the women’s movement. I am also aware that the achievements, roadblocks, lessons, fears, and challenges regarding the process of acknowledging women’s rights should be discussed, and that there is still a long way to go to institutionalize gender within the State and to make people respect the rights obtained in order to exercise them.

Progress Made

A large number of laws acknowledge and safeguard women’s rights. These laws have all been the outcome of the pressure of all kinds of discrimination. It seems you have to be a woman to combat discrimination against women.

The law promotes a fair and balanced territorial development, with gender equality and a focus on the economy/production and on human development. It provides for the adoption of better strategies to meet development objectives with social and gender equality and equal opportunities, and for the implementation of a General Development Plan based on the concept of social and gender equality and equal opportunities, and for the implementation of a General Development Plan based on the concept of social and gender equality.

Multi-year budgets and programs, annual budgets and operational plans should consider investment projects, programs, and policies based on social and gender equality, while ensuring a real budget that may meet the differentiated needs and demands of both men and women. It is necessary to underscore the significance of having a Political Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia that may cause the gender approach to crosscut all policies and acknowledge women’s specific rights, but with Assembly members and part of the women’s movement. I am also aware that the achievements, roadblocks, lessons, fears, and challenges regarding the process of acknowledging women’s rights should be discussed, and that there is still a long way to go to institutionalize gender within the State and to make people respect the rights obtained in order to exercise them.

The spaces where we may now share our experiences and strengthen our political endeavor are a clear example of women’s greater participation in the political sphere. However, the congressional seats we have obtained are the result of struggles, demonstrations, investigations and theoretical constructions, of peaceful and perhaps not so peaceful assemblies by so many women who dreamt of equality, freedom, and equity.

Spain reporter Soledad Gallego-Díaz said that “You don’t need to be Jewish to combat anti-Semitism, just as you don’t need to be black to fight racism. Unfortunately, sometimes it seems you have to be a woman to combat discrimination against women.”

Gina Godoy, ECUADOR ASSEMBLY MEMBER

Lawyer; activist fighting for the human rights of girls, boys, adolescents, and women. Militant fighting for the eradication of intrafamily and gender violence. Former director of the CEPEM Guayaquil legal service. Former government official at the Ministry of Policy Competencies, and Territorial Mobilization. Constitutional Convention Member for Guayas Province, and a member of the Justice and the Fight against Corruption Committee. Transition Assembly member participating in the Legislation and Oversight Committee. Her work has been focused on the defence of social justice rights, the rights of women, children, and adolescents, among other priority groups. Re-elected as Assembly Member for Guayas Province, and currently a member of the Committee on Autonomous Government, Decentralization, Competencies, and Territorial Organization. Has received several awards in recognition of her work in the defence of human rights from Ecuador’s Office of the Ombudsmen, the National Childhood and Adolescents Council, Cantonal Council of Rural Parish Boards, as well as from GLBTQI groups in recognition of her fight against all kinds of discrimination. Current President of the Ecuadorian Translocal Amasina Parliamentary Group. In July 2010 she was elected President of the Inter-American Parliamentary Group on Population and Development.

Assessing the enforcement of parity democracy: 2008 constitution

Types of autonomy
• Procedure to achieve an autonomous status
• Procedure to draft Statutes and Charters
• Competence and economic and financial systems
• Coordination between the central government level and autonomous territorial units
• Overall participation and social control framework

Gender equality acknowledgement is ratified in the establish-ment of autonomous territorial unit governments. Furthermore, the principles of equality and equal opportunities is introduced as a goal of the System of Autonomies, thus guaranteeing people’s access to education, health, and labour, while respecting their diversity, without any discrimination or exploitation, enjoying full social justice, and promoting decolonization.

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A study on political leadership positions, **six** parties were analyzed: Democratic Left, People’s Democracy, Ecuadorean Roldosist Party, Social Christian Party, National Plan for the Eradication of gender violence against women, boys, girls, and adolescents, and the Quota Law.

The 1997-2000 period witnessed the main struggles to enforce the quota rules stipulated by the Electoral Law, whereby the list of candidates had to feature at least thirty percent (30%) of women among the main candidates and thirty percent (30%) of women among alternate candidates, in an alternate and sequential way.

Although this rule was gradually enforced, its sequencing and alternating was only adopted in 2007, when Ecuador decided to embark on a new state restructuring process through the discussion of a new constitutional framework. During that year two important decisions were made: the Constitutional Court approved the amendments to the Constitutional Code that establishes a parity status between men and women and the Quota Law as an instrument towards parity has been determined its enforcement in all decision-making levels.

During the Constitutional Convention process (2007), an attempt was made to change at least three factors that directly affect women’s political participation: 1) the principles governing the law in connection with parties and elections; 2) the role of political parties in promoting parity, cooperation, and equality between men and women; and 3) the issues faced by us women when trying to reconcile the public and private spheres, especially because reproductive work is still not seen as a female task.

A spectacular achievement of the Republic included three major achievements in terms of gender:

1. It declares gender violence to be entitled to constitutional protection.
2. It forces the State to adopt affirmative action measures aimed at narrowing the gap in women’s participation and representation in the political space.
3. It establishes a parity status between men and women and determines its enforcement in all decision-making levels of public power.

Furthermore, the Constitution states that parity will be guaranteed in the Electoral Function and the Legislative Function, in the judicial and Executive Function, where “efforts will be made toward” parity. Also, it stipulated by law that for the Transparency and Social Control Function affirmative action measures should be adopted to set up the Council on Citizen Participation and Social Control.

The New Democracy Code has been a major step forward in the field of political rights, as it exposes the problems inherent to electoral processes: funding, internal party democracy through primary elections, and creation of lists while respecting the principles of parity, alternating, and sequencing. These actions ensure parity in the participation of elections but not in the results; there are currently 40 women as regular Assembly members (2% less than in the Constitutional Convention) 2 women as provincial prefects, and 13 women mayors.

There are regulatory and enforcement challenges to be faced if we are to make the affirmative action measures tilt the balance of women’s participation, to get enough political and economic support from parties and movements, to promote women candidates, and to have political campaigns conceived with a non-masculinized perspective of the public space. The women who are in decision-making spheres should work together with social organizations to encourage leadership and the creation of spaces for debate and the emergence of women as new political actors.

Anyhow, a promising road lies ahead. The National Assembly passed the new Law on Further Education providing for several affirmative action measures that will enable women to access studies that were historically intended solely for men, and along with other measures aimed at having equal number of men and women in university and at further education decision-making levels.

Another achievement was the open selection process undergone by the Council on Citizen Participation and Social Control and the equal quota of men and women members. Also, more and more women hold designated positions in the Executive. The National Assembly includes a multiparty Parliamentary Group on Women’s Rights with over fifty per cent of male and female members committed to the development of rules guaranteeing equity and equality.

Among other achievements, another decision was made to change at least three factors that directly affect women’s political participation: 1) the principles governing the law in connection with parties and elections; 2) the role of political parties in promoting parity, cooperation, and equal-
Women politicians and the media: a controversial relationship?

Cecilia Medina, ECUADORIAN COMMUNICATOR

- Social Communicator
- Holds a master's degree in Social Sciences with a major in Gender and Development from FLACSO.
- Completed a diploma in Gender and Healthcare Policies at FLACSO.
- Member of Constituency, Ecuadorian Agency for Youth Ecuatoriana por el Accion Juvenil Ecuatoriana por el Accion – CEPAJ (Ecuadorian Agency for Youth Action) and of SIGNIS
- Current advisor of Assembly Group Andrade.
- Has conducted several investigations into sexual crimes, migration, health, and sexual and reproductive rights.
- Advisor of Assembly Member Gina Godoy Andrade.

Building women's image

In order to explain the complex image-building relations, and the mixture of political marketing and advertising around women, I shall refer to Oliver Stone's new movie "South of the Border" about Latin American center-left governments. There is footage showing Stone walking by President Cristina Fernández and asking her: "How many pairs of shoes do you have?" To this, she quickly answers: "I don't know. I've never counted them. Why do you ask me that? They never ask a man about how many pairs of shoes he has". Despite being a film-maker known in his country as an observer of the mechanisms of power, he could not help being trapped by one of them, because the construction of messages in the media is related to the way concepts are positioned. However, the fact that his question had had an impact on the people also says something about the media and their relationship with the AUDIENCES.

Thanks to our experience and theories on communication, we human beings have managed to go from producing messages that have counted them. Why do you ask me that? They never ask a man about how many pairs of shoes he has". Despite being a film-maker known in his country as an observer of the mechanisms of power, he could not help being trapped by one of them, because the construction of messages in the media is related to the way concepts are positioned. However, the fact that his question had had an impact on the people also says something about the media and their relationship with the AUDIENCES.

The fact of turning our ideas into a concept that is rapidly acknowledged and accepted is known as positioning. What has positioning gender- and women-related concepts meant for the construction of sexist advertising. The mixture of political marketing and advertising around women, I shall refer to Oliver Stone's new movie "South of the Border" about Latin American center-left governments. There is footage showing Stone walking by President Cristina Fernández and asking her: "How many pairs of shoes do you have?" To this, she quickly answers: "I don't know. I've never counted them. Why do you ask me that? They never ask a man about how many pairs of shoes he has". Despite being a film-maker known in his country as an observer of the mechanisms of power, he could not help being trapped by one of them, because the construction of messages in the media is related to the way concepts are positioned. However, the fact that his question had had an impact on the people also says something about the media and their relationship with the AUDIENCES.

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When women develop strategies of political incidence, their scenario analysis should consider “their audience’s attitudes”, which may be conditioned by individual interests, fundamental values, cultural determining factors, religious beliefs, ideologies, political stances, family and friendship relations, professional environment, economic possibilities, but also by beliefs on gender roles. In fact, political campaigns usually tap into these attitudes to position certain “values” like nationalism, progress, equality, and respect for traditions.

The relationship of women politicians with the media to convey messages to male and female voters is also controversial, because it has been highlighted that the notion of leadership, for instance, is associated with men. It has been noted that women politicians are requested to increase their work performance, but also their capacity to successfully juggle their private and public life. In other words, it is the women politicians themselves who may easily encourage the perpetuation of gender roles.

If we wish to change the dynamics between politics and the media and not only ask ourselves about the most suitable channels to approach the electorate, we should also wonder which messages can be constructed to capitalize on all the media available, how we can review the values related to what is “feminine”, how we can make our language more inclusive, clear, and accurate.

Tachi Arriola Iglesias, Peruvian Communicator

Women and the political word in the mass media

Think with your head, have something to say, grab your audience’s attention, or know how to say it are all Jesús Martín Barbero’s wise tips regarding male and female communicators. Politicians, and in this case women politicians, are communicators by their very nature. You, Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, have already walked the first steps, think with your head, and have something to say. But, can we really say that you have grabbed your audience’s attention, and that you know how to say what you know? I am asking this only based on Barbero’s statements and fully convinced that an active and proactive presence and communication in the media is a key part of the exercise of political power, of exposure, and the encounter with the population in a media-oriented society like our Latin American society. If you are not in the media, you are nowhere. In the past, the popularity of politicians and policies was measured in the public squares. Today, the public squares are the TV, the radio, the print media, and the Internet. We are experiencing the mass mediation of politics.

What is at stake in the media? The public agendas, the scenarios from which power is exerted, the influence on decision-making. And this power game exposes economic, partisan, and also gender interests. How many women politicians come out in the media? How many of them are featured as protagonists of “serious issues” like politics, the economy, or strategic assets? And how are they featured? Peru has a rather handsome woman minister, and the media call her Miss Minister.

Barbero Jesús-Martín, Al Sur de la Modernidad, ILLI, Serie Nuevo Siglo, 2001, p. 80
her performance in the three ministries she has worked at or her commitment to equality between men and women citizens. Despite this, she says they are treated as if they were not Latin American women. Full details were given of the clothing, hairstyle, and charming appearance of women presidents and ministers. And of men politicians too.

Even politics have style. And American image consultant Dorothy Sarnoff’s words are revealing when she says that “opinion polls indicate that only 8% of the audience pays attention to the speakers, 42% to the looks of the speaker; and 50% to the way he/she speaks”. This analysis may sound too trivial or marketing-oriented, but there is no doubt about the value of words.

When women want to become decision-makers without being caught up in entertainment and show, they have to overcome many barriers so that the public, the audience, the listeners, regardless of their clothes, hairstyle or physical appearance. We are faced with pre-established ways and gendered speech patterns which are inconsistent with our experiences as women. How can we make our words gain our presence and reach our audience’s heart and mind? How can we argue, discussed, deep political discourse also sound moving like a prima donna and trying to be seen and present, even using the copycatting. Affective. Women can reach citizens through a really affective speech, close to their needs and tastes. By default, and due to the social construction of gender, women are programmed by their feelings, while men are disoriented in this respect. Women bet on change based on subjectivity, on trying to understand the other person and his/her feelings. We are capable of creating empathy, of respecting people and putting ourselves in their shoes.

A Style of Our Own. Women are capable of conveying hope since this hope has been silenced through political messages by betting on ethics, on conveying the truth, of understanding the other person and his/her feelings. We are capable of creating empathy, of respecting people and putting ourselves in their shoes.

The Basics

Omar Rincón, in his book Las Tele-presidentes: cerca del pueblo, lejos de la democracia, describes the kommer used by politicians to impress their audience, followers, and voters. Could the women parliamentarians be inspired by it and produce a fempolitikit?

Let us think of different ways of creating our fempolitikit and its main tenets:

Affection. Women can reach citizens through a really affective speech, close to their needs and tastes. By default, and due to the social construction of gender, women are programmed by their feelings, while men are disoriented in this respect. Women bet on change based on subjectivity, on trying to understand the other person and his/her feelings. We are capable of creating empathy, of respecting people and putting ourselves in their shoes.

When it comes to women parliamentarians their style, charisma and leadership based on truth, without any demagogy or populism. And with no copycatting. A Style of Our Own. A useful element of comunikit is the need to have a well-defined personality, a unique and innovative style, charisma and leadership based on truth, without any demagogy or populism. And with no copycatting.

Communicative Conviction. Learning to argue and not just repeating the slogans. Don’t be afraid of changing existing ideas and not just repeating the slogans. Don’t be afraid of changing existing ideas and not just repeating the slogans. Don’t be afraid of changing existing ideas and not just repeating the slogans. Don’t be afraid of changing existing ideas and not just repeating the slogans. Don’t be afraid of changing existing ideas and not just repeating the slogans.

Incorruptible Ethics. Women are traditionally seen as more honest. Regardless of whether this is true or false, women should try and stick to the old saying of “not only looking like queens but being queens”, in the sense of keeping consistence of words and actions, which is the most difficult thing to achieve in the public and private life. “When you don’t live as you think, you end up thinking as you live”, warns Gabriel Marcel, a French author and philosopher.

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autonomous thinking, consistency, a direct relationship with citizens, and commitment to women. All these are key elements to addressing the citizen audience with a quality message and being entitled to speak, which constitutes the basis of actual political power.

Change in Discourse Quality. Although I have said that we already think with our head and have something to say, women parliamentarians should self-analyze their discourse to verify it is a fact. Thinking critically is thinking with autonomy, says Barbero. Therefore, it is worthwhile recalling we should study permanently, review concepts, encourage autonomous thinking, consistency, a direct relationship with citizens, and commitment to women. All these are key elements to addressing the citizen audience with a quality message and being entitled to speak, which constitutes the basis of actual political power.

Hints for improving communication

José Ignacio López Vigil, CUBAN COMMUNICATOR, WRITER, RADIALIST

• Has spent his life in booths and over a microphone.
• Training Coordinator at ALER.
• AMARC Regional Director.
• Current Coordinator of Radialistas Apasionadas y Apasionados, headquarters in Quito.
• Author of controversial series such as “Un tal Jesús”, “500 Engaños”, “Noticias de Última Ira”, and “Otro Dios es posible”.
• Has run courses and workshops on radio production in every country in the region.
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In ancient times, orators advised beginning speeches “in medias res”. That is, into the middle of things, by plunging straight into action.

But, how do we usually start our speeches? Apologizing because we were asked to speak at the last minute, because we did not have time to prepare our speech. Or saying what we are going to say and will never get to say, and warning that if we do not say what we mean to say... That is, with useless talk. The first minute is critical to the success or failure of the speech. People have an endless capacity to get distracted. So, we need to grab their attention from the start. You should begin telling a story, with a striking phrase, or something that seizes attention. If you win that very first moment, you are on the right track.

Second commandment: SPEAK, DON’T READ

The best thing is to have an outline of ideas and dare speak. It is usually boring and artificial to listen to someone reading, and

The Fem-Politi-Kit tool kit should include some tips or hints for improving our communication, for expressing ourselves better, either in a conversation, presentation, interview, or radio or TV show.

And as there are 10 tips, I will order them as a decalogue.

First Commandment: START BY GOING STRAIGHT TO THE POINT

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Do not be ashamed of using your people’s expressions. Some women seem to be asking permission to use a proverb (“as it is commonly said”). There is nothing common about using proverbs, comparisons, popular sayings, expressions that are typical of your region and country.

Of course, do not use those having a male chauvinist, homophobic, racist, or fascist content.

Fifth Commandment: USE HUMOUR

Using humour does not mean cracking a joke, let alone preposterous content. Moreover, humour shows strength. A person who loses temper sometimes seems absurd precept that important things should be said in a grave manner is worth a hundred good points. To know and use popular sayings. Using a proverb in a timely manner is to make difficult things easy, and explain complex things in a simple way. (Sometimes, we do just the opposite and complicate simple things… to dazzle the fool. As I said the other day, make your presentations entertaining. Break away with that absurd precept that important things should be said in a grave and formal way. Laugh and make your audience laugh to create a relaxed atmosphere. In fact, we only remember those ideas and opinions that were said in an emotional manner. And humour is an inherent feeling to the human being.

Moreover, humour shows strength. A person who loses temper also loses the debate.

Laughter unlocks people. Fear paralyses them. Remember Umberto Eco’s novel The Name of the Rose.

Sixth Commandment: ARGUE, DON’T INSULT

Some individuals do not insult but repeat slogans as if people were stupid, as if the audience could be domesticated like Pavlov’s dogs. But people are smarter and wiser than what it sometimes seems.

Seventh commandment: BE ENTHUSIASTIC

Before going on stage, Greek directors used to ask their cast: “Do you feel enthusiastic?”… You do? Then, act and speak!

“Enthusiasm” is a nice word. It means “possessed by the gods”. In your case, by “the goddesses”. If you do not feel like speaking, if your eyes are not bright, if you do not feel a passion inside to communicate these ideas, you’d better shut up and leave it for next time.

Sound convinced, as if you really believe in what you are saying. There’s another nice word, “convinced”. It means “conquering together”. Not crushing the other, but sharing the victory.

Eight Commandment: USE LAY, INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Spanish is a dreadful patriarchal and masculinist language. We will therefore make an effort to visualize both sexes, men and women. If we say “niños (boys)” we are not including “niñas” (girls). Because a niña (a girl) is not a niño (a boy). What would happen if we always spoke of “women” and asked men to feel included by this term?!

In order to overcome this “linguistic machoocracy”, we refer to the inclusive language. We will use a female and male students, male and female workers, male and female peasants… What’s so difficult about it? We will use a bit more words… but we will visualize the female half of the population.

As necessary as the inclusive language is the lay language. We live in secular states, we represent a plural society with different religious and non-religious options. A woman parliamentarian of a secular state cannot impose her convictions, not even in her discourse.

Keep your religious or non-religious beliefs to you and your family. There is no room for symbols or prayers or religious expressions in a secular state.12
Ninth Commandment: BE BRIEF.

We love going on and on, beating about the bush, repeating what we have already said, announcing what we are going to say, insisting on what has already been insisted on... Many men politicians (and also women politicians) suffer from verbal diarrhoea.

The Greek philosophers used to say “less is more”. So, learn how to say what you have to say without any introductions, epilogues, or repetitions. Conciseness is a virtue appreciated by all listeners. It is better to leave your audience hungry for words than overstuffed.

Ten Commandment: END WITH STYLE

Way too often, we do not know how to end a presentation or a speech. We say we have run short of time. We make excuses because we could not say what we wanted to say, but at least we said... we get entangled in useless ramblings.

End with an effective closing statement, with a perfect finale. For instance, I will now close by saying:

Keep these 10 commandments in your Fem-Politic-Kit, stick to them... and you will see the results!
MEETING OF THE GROUP OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS INTERPARLIAMENTARY FORUM OF THE AMERICAS (FIPA)

Considering:
The Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA), formed by parliamentarians endowed with popular representation, committed to the interests of our peoples and, particularly, the rights of women:

- Recognize that the advances of women in the exercise of our rights and the achievement of greater and better opportunities for participation, are the result of our ongoing and systematic struggle, which we assert is still necessary to continued progress in eliminating discrimination, inequalities and all forms of violence;
- Recognize that the participation of women in most legislatures in the Americas has increased, although for the conquest of these spaces women still face social obstacles and exclusionary practices in formal politics;
- Recognize that, as women parliamentarians of the Americas, we represent greater ethnic, cultural and social diversity and, although having made some progress, there are still challenges to be met;
- Recognize that the presence of women in spaces of public power is essential to transform and consolidate democracies in the Americas;
- Recognize that we still have to influence politically the Public Agenda so that it incorporates women’s proposals and demands.

For these foregoing reasons we agree to approve the following:

QUITO DECLARATION OF THE GROUP OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS

The Group of Women Parliamentarians gathered in the city of Quito, the days 11 and 12 of August of 2010, commits to join efforts to accomplish:

I. Strengthen Parliamentary actions and expand their impact, in order to make a sustained progress towards a real advance on women’s rights.
II. Work to ensure the introduction of a gender perspective in legislation and in all that the legislature does, in order to improve the status of women’s rights and to eliminate all forms of exclusion.
III. Promote constitutional reforms so that domestic legislation is consistent with international instruments on women’s rights, such as the Belem do Pará Convention, CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women) and the Beijing Platform, to overcome inconsistencies in their application.
IV. Commit our parliaments to proposals in favour of women and substantive equality between men and women as the only way to promote social transformation.
V. Empower women through the integration with other women parliamentarians and women’s organizations, within and outside the country, to work together and to share experiences, knowledge and proposals.
VI. Legislative on the basis of the separation between church and state, and secular ethics as a principle for making laws and controlling actions, to the benefit of all women in their diversity and uniqueness.
VII. Demand that competent authorities ratify, adopt and implement international instruments concerning the rights of girls, (female) adolescents and women.
VIII. Create mechanisms for women to participate in a context of substantive progress toward the equality of women and men in the private sphere, so that household responsibilities are shared, and women have more time for greater participation and greater enjoyment of rights that are restricted by having to do double and triple duty.
IX. Share the legislative and supervisory work of parliaments with women’s organizations and organized civil society, enabling accountability and genuine citizen participation.
X. Monitor public organizations in their compliance with the women’s rights within the framework of their competences.
XI. Ensure equitable access for men and women to communication media, while eliminating sexist and discriminatory content through a committed approach to the full exercise of women’s rights and their promotion and defence.

Given in the city of Quito, Republic of Ecuador, on August 12, 2010.

(The Declaration has been signed by those included in the list of participants)
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LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
GENERAL MANUELA SAENZ (1797–1856) is the controversial and challenging Ecuadorian patriot whose picture illustrates the cover of these memoirs. Her relationship to Simón Bolívar and her many services to the fights for Independence in Ecuador, Colombia and Peru won her recognition as “the liberator of the Liberator”. One of the often forgotten causes to which she devoted her efforts is the rights of women, and she is also renowned for her firm, feminist stance. She died in exile, and almost completely neglected in Paita, Peru, during a diphtheria outbreak. She was buried in a common grave, but her campaign in Pichincha and Ayacucho has not been forgotten. The current Ecuadorian President declared her “Honorable General” on 22 May 2007, thus acknowledging a military rank already awarded to her in history books.