

7th Gathering of the Group of Women Parliamentarians Begins Today

June 11, 2015

From the 11 to the 14 of June, parliamentarians from across the Americas will meet in Buenos Aires and Termas de Río Hondo, Argentina, for the 7th Gathering organized by the Group of Women Parliamentarians, on an **Action Plan for Preventing Political Harassment and Violence Against Women**.

Political harassment and violence against women is an extremely important issue that is little discussed in the Americas. The scale of political harassment as an obstacle to women's ability to exercise their political rights and to democracy in the hemisphere is still not well known. The topic was identified as a priority during the session on strategic planning that delegates participated in during the meeting of ParlAmericas' Group of Women Parliamentarians in 2014 in Mexico City.

The official inauguration of this year's Gathering will take place in the National Congress of Argentina with opening remarks from Aida Ruiz, member of the Chamber of Deputies of Argentina and host of the Gathering; Marcela Guerra, senator from Mexico and president of ParlAmericas; Claudia Nogueira, member of the Chamber of Deputies of Chile and Vice-President of the Group of Women Parliamentarians; and Gerardo Zamora, provisional president of the Argentine Senate.

During the meetings on June 12 and 13, opening remarks will be given by the Governor of Santiago del Estero, Claudia Ledesma. There will also be presentations facilitated by Keila González, director of the Mexican office of the National Democratic Institute for international affairs, who has a long trajectory in the struggle for gender equality and women's rights in politics. Among the panelists will be Ingrid Zabala, former parliamentarian from Bolivia and current secretary general of the women's organization, *Asociación Coordinadora de la Mujer* (COOMUJER, Beni), and Irune Aguirrezabal, regional advisor on leadership and political participation for the UN Women's Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean.

Alongside this, there will be a panel discussion on political harassment, with panelists Sandra Generoso, Justice of the Court of Appeals and former member of the provincial Chamber of Deputies of Argentina; Diego Vintimilla, member of the National Assembly of Ecuador; Sheila Capps, former Deputy Prime Minister of Canada; Ligia Fallas Rodríguez, member of the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica; and Margarita Flores, Mexican Senator. Lastly, the meeting will include working groups where the parliamentarians will discuss individual and collective work to be done based on the Action Plan developed. There will also be a ceremony to pledge commitment to the HeforShe campaign, an initiative of UN Women. The closing ceremony will be carried out by Aida Ruiz, member of the Chamber of Deputies of Argentina and host of the Gathering; Marcela Guerra, senator from Mexico and president of ParlAmericas; and Claudia Nogueira, member of the Chamber of Deputies of Chile and Vice-President of the Group of Women Parliamentarians.

This gathering will have the objective of inviting participants to reflect on the current situation in their respective countries with respect to political harassment and violence against women. It

will also aim to determine what obstacles are facing female politicians in their respective nations. Parliamentarians will determine the alliances and synergies necessary to be able to take concrete action and make specific commitments, and in this way allow for the successful implementation of the Action Plan.

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ParlAmericas – the network of the national legislatures of member states of the Organization of American States (OAS) – serves as an independent forum for parliamentarians of the Americas committed to cooperative political dialogue and participation in the inter-American system. Since 2001, ParlAmericas has created a supportive professional community for parliamentarians through regional forums, training opportunities, year-round discussions, and follow-up actions. ParlAmericas is a space to share experiences and best practices on issues of hemispheric concern and to strengthen the ties between the countries of the hemisphere through parliamentary diplomacy.

ParlAmericas is managed by parliamentarians for parliamentarians, with a current board of directors comprising 18 parliamentarians representing 16 member legislatures from North, South, and Central America and the Caribbean.