

## Legislators commit to ParlAmericas' Plan of Action to prevent political violence

15 June 2015

The 7th Gathering of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of ParlAmericas, Action Plan for Preventing Political Harassment and Violence against Women, concluded Saturday night 13 June. More than 70 participants of the Americas attended the meeting.

During the closing ceremony, Marcela Guerra, Mexican Senator and President of ParlAmericas underlined the value, dedication, and commitment that ParlAmericas' Group of Women Parliamentarians has placed on the cause of gender equality and the empowerment of women. *"With the Action Plan for Preventing Political Harassment and Violence against Women, all of us return home with a valuable tool to share with our Congresses and with our citizens. Just yesterday in the National Congress of Argentina, in Buenos Aires, I said that Parliaments in the Americas have made great advances in terms of legislation on gender equality. Now it is our obligation to turn this into action."*

For her part, Claudia Nogueira, member of the Chamber of Deputies for Chile and Vice-President of the Group of Women Parliamentarians, highlighted that *"meetings like this one with ParlAmericas are of paramount importance as they allow us to find points of commonality between different societies, but with shared characteristics. This is because gender discrimination and gender violence are repeated across different contexts and realities. As parliamentarians we must raise our voices against those who violate women's rights in all areas where we are called to represent our citizens."*

Furthermore, Aida Ruiz, member of the Chamber of Deputies of Argentina and host of the Gathering, shared his vision *"of what follows after this meeting: we are the voices in our parliaments calling for a life without political, labor, sexual or hierarchical harassment. A life without any harassment where violence gives way to essential respect, the uniqueness of every being."*

On the third day of the Gathering, there was a panel made up of Diego Vintimilla, member of the National Assembly of Ecuador; Sheila Copps, former Deputy Prime Minister of Canada; Sandra Generoso, Justice of the Court of Appeals and former member of the provincial Chamber of Deputies of Argentina; Ligia Fallas Rodríguez, member of the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica; and Margarita Flores, Senator from Mexico. The panellists described the current situation in their respective countries regarding political harassment and violence, identifying obstacles that women that participate in politics face in their respective countries.

There was also a pledge ceremony for the HeforShe campaign, an initiative of UN Women that aims to bring together half of the population in support of the other half, for the benefit of humanity as a whole. The parliamentarians in attendance promised to pass this message on to their Parliaments in an effort to better involve men in the fight for gender equality.

The legislators present acknowledged that in order to achieve real equality there is a need for resources, political will, and sanctions against those who commit political harassment and

violence. They also concluded that political violence and political harassment constitute barriers to representative democracy that must be eradicated.

During the final day of the Gathering of the Group of Women Parliamentarians, participants made concrete commitments towards continuing in the struggle for equality. Notable initiatives included classifying political harassment as a crime that has clear and specific penalties and involving the media in order to change the social behaviours that promote political harassment and gender stereotyping.