



Caribbean legislators gather at ParlAmericas meeting in Saint Lucia to raise awareness about gender-based political harassment

For immediate release

Castries, Saint Lucia, January 25, 2016

From January 26 to 27, legislators from more than 10 countries across the Caribbean and other Anglophone countries of the Americas will convene in Castries to exchange experiences and strategies to overcome the problem of gender-based political harassment. This inter-parliamentary meeting, titled *Gender-based Political Harassment: Building Awareness in Parliaments*, is organized by the Group of Women Parliamentarians of ParlAmericas and is being hosted by the Government of Saint Lucia and presiding officers the Honourable Peter I. Foster, Speaker of the House of Assembly and the Honourable Claudius J. Francis, President of the Senate. The Honourable Alvina Reynolds, Minister responsible for Gender Relations, will also give remarks at the inauguration.

ParlAmericas and the Saint Lucian delegation of former and current parliamentarians will welcome representatives of the legislatures of Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Canada, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad and Tobago. The delegates will be joined by subject matter experts from UN Women, the Inter-American Commission of Women of the Organization of American States, the Caribbean Institute of Women in Leadership, and the University of the West Indies.

Political harassment, the topic being undertaken, refers to intimidation or violence targeting women active in public life, in ways which are both politically motivated and based on gender. In the context of parliamentary politics, this can be manifested as sexist language, biased media coverage, pressure to renounce elected office, and other forms of aggression. These violations of women's political rights reinforce traditional gender roles and male-dominated decision making spaces. Parliaments have an important responsibility to raise awareness and to effectively address and prevent this problem.

During the two-day working meeting, delegates will share perspectives on political harassment, the challenges faced by women in parliaments, the media portrayal of women's political leadership, as well as best practices in developing anti-harassment policies and codes of conduct in political parties, and related legal frameworks. The meeting's dialogues, panels, and presentations will inform future parliamentary action on preventing political harassment. On the second day of the meeting, delegates will present strategic work plans to empower women in the political sphere, building on gender-sensitive parliamentary projects.

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ParlAmericas is the network of the national legislatures of member states of the Organization of American States. It serves as an independent forum for parliamentarians of the Americas and the Caribbean 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.

For more information about this meeting or ParlAmericas' gender equality work, please contact the International Secretariat of ParlAmericas at info.parlamericas@parl.gc.ca.