



9TH GATHERING OF THE PARLIAMENTARY NETWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY

#ParlAmericasGender

THEME

Women's Empowerment:
Social and Political Responses

DATE

May 23-24, 2017

LOCATION

Buenos Aires, Argentina

PARTICIPANTS

More than 70
parliamentarians and civil
society representatives from
25 countries and territories

The 9th Gathering organized by the **Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality** was hosted by the Chamber of Deputies of Argentina, and it brought together legislators, former legislators, and social movement activists for working sessions on collective efforts to advance gender equality. In response to the growing prominence of women-led social movements, which has been strengthened by the expansion of online social networks, delegates discussed the opportunities presented by this new reality with respect to political representation in the region.

The gathering opened with welcoming

"I must respond to the question I have been asked to speak to – about the challenges of women's movements in the world today – by starting with what I consider to be the priority at this time: to not disassociate our demands from our national agendas and to continue unremittingly in the fight for inclusion in society and in political parties. It is the case that today, in terms of the world and of Latin America, the challenges faced by women are also those of democracy."



The keynote address was delivered by **MINOU TAVÁREZ MIRABAL**, a former parliamentarian and former presidential candidate from the Dominican Republic whose career has centred on social justice causes

¹Now known as the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality

remarks by Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Margarita Stolbizer** (Argentina) as host of the gathering; Senator **Marcela Guerra** (Mexico), President of ParlAmericas; and Second Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies **Patricia Giménez** (Argentina).

The first session of the gathering, “Social Movements for Gender Equality: Experiences Engaging in Political Spaces,” explored the role of recent movements in raising public awareness and momentum for policy changes to advance gender equality. Representatives from **Ni**

Una Menos ([link available in Spanish](#)), **Tambourine Army**, and the women’s movement for peace in Colombia, represented at the gathering by **Casa de la Mujer** ([link available in Spanish](#)), shared objectives and strategies employed, highlighting good practices for enabling collaboration with legislators. The question period and dialogue that followed explored legal reforms and cultural transformations necessary to guarantee the rights of women and groups historically discriminated against, with particular attention to how to support survivors of gender violence.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS REPRESENTED

NI UNA MENOS (Not One Woman Less) Argentina



Movement to end femicide and other forms of gender-based violence

“Sexist violence often happens between people close to the victims [and therefore] is not an issue that can be resolved with politics alone. It is an issue that we must all work to address, it is a question of culture, but it needs help from politics, the judiciary, and the media.”



ANA CORREA, political communications consultant and member of the group of activists that organized the first Ni Una Menos march in Argentina

WOMEN’S MOVEMENT FOR PEACE Colombia



Network of women’s organizations, such as Casa de la Mujer, advocating for a gender-responsive negotiated solution to the internal armed conflict

“One element that was included [in the negotiation of the peace agreements], which the Constitutional Court had already worked on thanks to the dedicated action of women as well, is that the armed conflict had a differential impact on the lives of women.”

OLGA AMPARO SÁNCHEZ, feminist researcher and director of Casa de la Mujer with extensive experience in promoting women’s participation in the peace dialogue processes in Colombia and reconstruction of the historical memory of women



TAMBOURINE ARMY Jamaica



Movement to end sexual violence and abuse against women and girls

“Social media has been the main space around which we have been able to galvanize action, get attention, and contribute to changing the narrative around gender-based violence and rape.”

NADEEN SPENCE, co-founder of the Tambourine Army and activist-academic whose work is dedicated to empowering women and girls through leadership development



KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

- ⇒ While women have gained access to the labour market, in general men have not in turn taken on an equitable share of household tasks (in the case of heterosexual couples).
- ⇒ Women often have workloads resulting in a “double burden” or “double shift,” as they are responsible for significant amounts of unpaid domestic labour in addition to full time paid employment.
- ⇒ The need for flexibility often results in women finding work in sectors that are precarious, informal, or with an overrepresentation of women, such as paid care work.
- ⇒ Increasing some women's access to secure employment (e.g. in the corporate sector) does not necessarily translate into improved conditions for other women (e.g. in the precarious sectors of domestic or care work).

In the second session, “Social Movements: Opportunities and Challenges for Political Representation,” parliamentarians with backgrounds in social justice movements spoke about their experiences advancing gender equality in their political lives, alongside, and in consultation with, civil society groups. Former parliamentarian **Gina Godoy**, outgoing president of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality, moderated the discussion of the panellists: Senator **Mobina Jaffer** (Canada), Member of Congress **Alberto de Belaunde** (Peru), Member of Congress **Sandra Morán** (Guatemala), and Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Guerda Benjamin** (Haiti).

Following the panel exchange, delegates worked in round tables to discuss how the demands and proposals put forward by social movements and civil society organizations can be translated into

concrete inputs to strengthen legislative work.

The final session of the gathering, “Challenges to Empowerment: Economic Autonomy and Gender Violence,” consisted of a presentation by **Mercedes D'Alessandro**, specialist in feminist economics, who provided a panorama of economic inequality in Latin America and the ways it can contribute to women's lack of empowerment. She shared research findings and frameworks for assessing the unequal distribution of domestic work and the pay gap.

The roundtable work that followed analyzed economic inequality and dependency in connection with gender violence – a primary theme discussed the previous day – as well as the key elements to a comprehensive public policy response to these interconnected issues.

“The social movements that have emerged in recent times are making demands associated with equality, the eradication of violence, and women's empowerment. As parliamentarians, we cannot neglect the voice of our communities; the women of our continent are speaking out to demand that we take action.”

Senator
MARCELA GUERRA
(Mexico), President of
ParlAmericas



“Women legislating have substantially changed the lives of many other women and many other men. Laws designed by women have allowed many men to also have access to social security that they did not have before women entered congress.”



Member of the
Chamber of Deputies
PATRICIA GIMÉNEZ
(Argentina), Second
Vice-President of the
Chamber of Deputies

The gathering concluded with the reading of a [declaration of commitment](#) which was subsequently adopted by the delegations of each parliament. The declaration recognizes that dialogue between citizens and parliaments is a fundamental value of democracy, and this can result in social and political benefits necessary to achieve the common good. Some of the commitments include:

- ⇒ Strengthening the measures in place to protect women leaders, activists, and participants in social movements to ensure their ability to exercise their political rights free from threats and violence.
- ⇒ Advancing parliamentary work on eliminating all forms of gender-based violence, with comprehensive reforms and initiatives that address prevention, detection, reporting, sanctioning, and reparation.
- ⇒ Promoting laws and policies that broaden the State's responsibility in the provision of care services, and that generate a more equitable distribution of domestic responsibilities between men and women.
- ⇒ Creating and strengthening, from within parliaments, spaces for exchange with civil society representatives working towards gender equality.

"As parliamentarians, the great challenge is to receive the demands of social movements and organizations, give them a space that is complementary to the space in which we work, and advance collectively in order to resolve the serious problems that affect women in the Americas."



Member of Congress
SANDRA MORÁN
(Guatemala)



"The pursuit of equality is the horizon of politics and democracy; full observance of human rights, democratic coexistence and peace are the objectives of our duties as parliamentarians."

Member of the Chamber of Deputies **MARGARITA STOLBIZER** (Argentina),
host of the gathering and Member of the Board of Directors of ParlAmericas



"Social discontent is a motor for change. It is precisely activism's demands and social movements that allow us to make progress."

Member of Congress **ALBERTO DE BELAUNDE** (Peru)

During the gathering, two new ParlAmericas resources were presented:



[Promoting Women's Candidacies:
An Overview of Electoral Systems,
Political Parties, and Campaign Financing](#)



[Equal Media Treatment of Women
Politicians: Recommendations to
Promote Balanced Media Coverage and
Communication Free of Gender
Stereotypes](#)

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PARLAMERICAS PARLIAMENTARY NETWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY (PNGE)

During the gathering, certain positions for the executive committee of the Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality were open for election and filled by acclamation. The current members are:

- ⇒ *President*
Karina Banfi, Member of the Chamber of Deputies of Argentina
- ⇒ *Vice-President for North America*
Mobina Jaffer, Senator of Canada
- ⇒ *Vice-President for Central America*
Ligia Fallas, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica
- ⇒ *Vice-President for the Caribbean*
Chester Humphrey, President of the Senate of Grenada
- ⇒ *Vice-President for South America*
Claudia Nogueira, Member of the Chamber of Deputies of Chile
- ⇒ *Observer*
Delsa Solórzano, Member of the National Assembly of Venezuela

In addition, it was announced that the host of the 2018 Gathering of the Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality will be the House of Representatives of Trinidad and Tobago.

"I am the daughter of social movements in Haiti, locally and nationally, and I pledge to continue to collaborate with the grassroots organizations in my community to advance their claims before the central State."

Member of the Chamber of Deputies
GUERDA BENJAMIN (Haiti)



"It is not easy to cross the path, to move from activism to parliamentary work. Activism's demands are limitless, but when we are in the legislature there are many difficulties we may encounter and that we must navigate."

Former parliamentarian
GINA GODOY
(Ecuador), outgoing President of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality



"When we talk about political representation we have to look at education, but also where are we in economic empowerment and who we are speaking for. Are we speaking for women who look like us, for women we went to school with, or are we speaking for all women?"



Senator **MOBINA JAFFER** (Canada), Vice-President (North America) of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality

This gathering marked the conclusion of **Gina Godoy's** mandate as President of the Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality. In recognition of this occasion, Senator **Marcela Guerra**, President of ParlAmericas, shared remarks to express ParlAmericas' sincere appreciation for Ms. Godoy's leadership and dedication to advancing the rights of women and girls in the Americas and the Caribbean. Ms. Godoy also offered reflections on the accomplishments of the Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality (previously known as the Group of Women Parliamentarians) during her term from 2015 to 2017.

Men as Allies in Parliamentary Work for Gender Equality

DATE

May 22, 2017

LOCATION

Buenos Aires, Argentina

PARTICIPANTS

More than 35 parliamentarians from 20 countries and territories

This training session was conducted on the margins of the 9th Gathering organized by the Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality and focused on the importance of the participation of men in parliament to advance gender equality initiatives, at both personal and institutional levels. Participants discussed what it means to be an ally for women's rights and gender equality in the parliamentary precinct, and they exchanged recommendations on how to mobilize the necessary changes. This session – in addition to the working sessions of the gathering – was facilitated by gender specialist **Virginia García Beaudoux**.

POSSIBLE ACTIONS TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY IN PARLIAMENTARY SPACES

Hold meetings and decision-making in spaces and at times that are accessible



E.g., avoid taking political decisions at bars late at night where women could be underrepresented due to family obligations

Ensure that, in group settings, gender norms limiting women's leadership are not reinforced



Is there an assumption that in political party meetings women will take on the tasks of making coffee or taking notes?

Review the composition of committees and other decision-making spaces to ensure equitable representation by women and men whenever possible



Do women tend to be assigned “soft portfolios”?

Use gender-sensitive language



“Congressmen” invisibilizes women

Draft legislation that facilitates shared domestic responsibilities and women's increased participation in public life



Are sufficient budgets being allocated for public policy implementation in support of relevant laws?

WHAT IS A MALE ALLY?

Male allies use spaces where men have historically had more privilege and voice than women (e.g., parliaments) to actively promote gender equality.

It means being attentive to, and challenging, negative gender stereotypes (e.g., leadership is masculine) or micro-aggressions (subtle, daily sexism), in ways that avoid speaking for women or inadvertently reinforcing patriarchal norms.

For information related to the work of the PNGE, contact the ParlAmericas Gender Equality Program:
parlAmericasgen@parlAmericas.org.



Former
parliamentarian
DIEGO VINTIMILLA

“The first thing is to understand that inequality is not something natural. And therefore, to think that the process of achieving real, substantive, material equality between men and women is an artificial process... is to begin in error. Equality refers to a historical process.”

“If this is a battle, the adversaries are within our own selves, men and women. Only a deep reflection on our actions and everyday sayings that reveals what is behind each of us – and on the reasons that lead us to unconsciously uphold centuries of discrimination – will allow us to win this battle.”



Member of the
Chamber of Deputies
JOSÉ LUIS RICCARDO
(Argentina)

PARLIAMENTS REPRESENTED AT THE GATHERING



ARGENTINA



ARUBA



BELIZE



BOLIVIA



CANADA



CHILE



COLOMBIA



COSTA RICA



CUBA



DOMINICAN
REPUBLIC



ECUADOR



EL SALVADOR



GRENADA



GUATEMALA



HAITI



HONDURAS



MEXICO



NICARAGUA



PANAMA



PERU



SAINT LUCIA



SURINAME



TRINIDAD
AND TOBAGO



VENEZUELA



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PARLAMERICAS



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ParlAmericas promotes policies and legislative measures to mitigate and adapt to the effects of **CLIMATE CHANGE**



ParlAmericas facilitates the exchange of parliamentary **BEST PRACTICES** and promotes **COOPERATIVE POLITICAL DIALOGUE**



ParlAmericas works towards strengthening democracy and governance by accompanying **ELECTORAL PROCESSES**



ParlAmericas mainstreams **GENDER EQUALITY** by advocating for women's political empowerment and the application of a gender lens in legislative work



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