



10TH GATHERING OF THE PARLIAMENTARY NETWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY

#ParlAmericasGender

The 10th annual Gathering of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality (PNGE) was hosted in Port of Spain by the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. This three-day meeting brought together parliamentarians from across the Americas and Caribbean region, alongside civil society activists and other subject matter experts. The Gathering's delegates participated in a series of working sessions that examined the differential impacts of climate change and natural disasters based on socio-economic inequalities and other demographic factors. The presentations and dialogues evidenced the transformative role that gender analysis and budgeting can play in this regard. The Gathering also highlighted the importance of strengthening women's participation in climate decision-

making and implementation, so that their knowledge and expertise is fully integrated in planning for a more resilient future. The delegates exchanged strategies and reflections on advancing towards these shared goals through parliamentary functions – particularly executive oversight and budget approval – and through partnerships with diverse stakeholders.

This Gathering was an opportunity to build on the interconnected work of two of ParlAmericas' program areas – Gender Equality and Climate Change – and to apply learning from recent activities on disaster risk reduction, social movements, and intersectional gender analysis.

THEME

Gender-Responsive Climate Action and Budgeting

LOCATION

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

DATE

May 22-24, 2018

PARTICIPANTS

More than 130 parliamentarians, government and parliamentary staff, and representatives of civil society and international organizations from 26 countries



This activity aligned with SDGs 3, 5, and 13.



The materials from each of the sessions of the Gathering are available on ParlAmericas' website. Recommended readings on the topics covered in the sessions are also available.

Day 1: Setting the Foundations for Gender Budgeting

The first activities carried out in the framework of the Gathering were training sessions on **gender-responsive budgeting**, offered in collaboration with UN Women. These specialized sessions for parliamentarians offered an introduction to the key concepts and analytical tools for different phases of the budget cycle, highlighting opportunities to promote or engage with gender budgeting initiatives through legislative work, such as advocating for the availability and use of disaggregated data in these efforts. The sessions also explored how outcomes can contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 5 on gender equality. During the trainings, the delegates worked in smaller groups to carry out an [exercise](#) about a fictional country devastated by a hurricane; they conducted post-disaster assessments from the point of view of different ministries and stakeholders responsible for advising on and approving budget allocations.



The session in English and French was delivered by **Isiuwa Iyahen**, Programme Specialist in Economic Empowerment and Statistics at the UN Women Multi-Country Office – Caribbean, with opening reflections by the Honourable **Bridgid Annisette-George**, Speaker of the House of Representatives (Trinidad and Tobago) and by the Honourable **Mobina Jaffer**, Senator (Canada) and Vice-President of the PNGE for North America. This session additionally featured a [presentation](#) by economist **Armine Yalnizyan**, who outlined the many social and economic benefits of gender budgeting with examples from Canada, where the most recent federal [budget](#) underwent an intersectional gender-based analysis ([GBA+](#)).

The session in Spanish was delivered by **Lorena Barba**, Analyst for Planning and Gender Budgeting at UN Women - Ecuador. It began with welcoming remarks by Member of the Legislative Assembly **Cristina Cornejo** (El Salvador) on behalf of ParlAmericas' Board of Directors. Ms. Cornejo stressed that the session aimed to build understanding about budgeting tools for more efficient and equitable distributions of national resources for all members of society.

Day 2: Inaugural Ceremony

The Gathering's official inauguration was presided over by the Honourable **Nigel de Freitas**, Vice-President of the Senate (Trinidad and Tobago) as Master of Ceremonies. It commenced with welcome addresses by the host, the Honourable **Bridgid Annisette-George**, the Honourable **Ayanna Webster-Roy**, Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister with responsibility for Gender and Child Affairs (Trinidad and Tobago), and the Honourable **Camille Robinson-Regis**, Minister of Planning and Development (Trinidad and Tobago). Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Karina Banfi** (Argentina), President of the PNGE, was unable to attend but via video shared inaugural remarks and best wishes for the working sessions. The Honourable **Robert Nault**, Member of Parliament (Canada) and Vice-President of ParlAmericas also offered opening remarks on behalf of the ParlAmericas Board of Directors.

“The engagement and leadership of both men and women, equally, are needed to make our response to climate change fully effective. One size does not fit all; gender neutrality – even if there were in reality such a thing – in the context of climate change and sustainable development will not only be inappropriate but is, and shall be, ineffective, inefficient and result in a wastage of resources. And of course, it shall leave, if not half, very large segments of our populations behind. We as legislators have long recognized that gender is a cross-cutting theme, and therefore it is incumbent upon us in this discharge of our responsibilities to fashion accordingly our policies of mitigation and risk reduction, preparation response and rehabilitation, and resilience and adaptation.”



The Honourable **Bridgid Annisette-George** (Trinidad and Tobago), Speaker of the House of Representatives, member of the ParlAmericas Board of Directors, and host of the Gathering

Keynote Address by WEDO

The keynote, titled “Gender Equality & Climate Policy: Words to Action,” was delivered by **Bridget Burns**, Co-Director of the Women’s Environment & Development Organization ([WEDO](#)), a global advocacy organization that promotes and protects human rights, gender equality, and the integrity of the environment. In her [presentation](#), Ms. Burns highlighted the importance of the current political moment and the timely nature of the Gathering in light of significant opportunities to advance the agenda through multi-lateral agreements, for instance the [Gender Action Plan](#) adopted at COP23, or through each country’s [Nationally Determined Contributions](#) (NDCs) for the Paris Agreement, submitted every five years to the UNFCCC secretariat. She provided regional examples to illustrate the benefits of taking a gender-responsive approach to climate change – among them, to guarantee human rights and that policies do not exacerbate inequalities – and stressed the critical importance of parliamentarians within this work.

“In a post-Paris world, where we need to be focused on implementation, what can be done to actually ensure that we’re moving on the gender mandates that we’ve given ourselves at a national level? And from there, the Gender Action Plan was adopted. It’s a two-year work plan that includes themes around capacity building, gender balance, coherence, gender-responsive implementation, and monitoring and reporting.”



Bridget Burns, Co-Director, WEDO

The Inaugural Ceremony concluded with a vote of thanks by the Honourable **Christine Kangaloo**, President of the Senate (Trinidad and Tobago).

“Strengthen the capacity of gender mechanisms, including for parliamentarians, the International Parliamentary Union, commissions, funding ministries, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations, for the integration of gender-responsive budgeting into climate finance, access and delivery through training, expert workshops, technical papers and tools.”

Priority Area D of the Gender Action Plan, “Gender-responsive implementation and means of implementation”

Nationally Determined Contributions

In the Americas and Caribbean, the following countries currently mention gender or women in their NDCs:

Barbados, Brazil, Costa Rica, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines



Among the tools distributed at this meeting was ParlAmericas’ “[Primer on the United Nations Climate Change Regime](#).” This resource provides parliamentarians with an introduction to the following key institutions and their functions:

- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- Conference of the Parties (COP)
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
- World Meteorological Organization (WMO)



Primer on the United Nations Climate Change Regime

Introduction

The planet’s climate has always experienced variations; this is a naturally occurring phenomenon. However, scientific research suggests that since the industrial revolution, human-driven causes have accelerated temperature increases in the planet’s atmosphere leading to unprecedented changes in the global climate system.

The United Nations Climate Change regime is at the forefront of global action to combat climate change, by addressing mitigation and adaptation challenges. Different institutions are providing the framework for international negotiations to shape climate policies, integrate expert advice and scientific evidence, undertake national assessments and establish priorities drawing from the research of thousands of scientists across the world.



Session 1: Approaching Climate Risks from a Gender Perspective: Entry Points for Parliamentary Action

This session was moderated by Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Pamela Jiles** (Chile) and provided context on the international policy tools that can be employed to guide gender-responsive action by actors at the national and local levels.

In her [presentation](#), **UnaMay Gordon**, Principal Director in the Climate Change Division of Jamaica's Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, explained that the Division undertook a thorough assessment of the international policy landscape, beginning with the [Cancun Adaptation Framework](#) and later the Paris Agreement and the SDGs, to orient their work on gender and climate change. Their efforts are also shaped by three important national-level guiding documents: the [National Policy for Gender Equality](#), the [Climate Change Policy Framework](#), and [Vision 2030](#).

Acknowledging the complexity of ensuring that both gender and climate are cross-cutting priorities, Ms. Gordon highlighted the positive role that the institutional structure of **focal point networks** has played in government ministries, departments and agencies in Jamaica. Previously, the Gender and Climate Change focal points did not coordinate closely, but synergies were strengthened through joint capacity-building activities. She noted that other priorities include maintaining gender-balanced delegations to COP negotiations, continuing broad public consultations with concerted efforts to reach marginalized communities in the country, and producing a gender-responsive National Adaptation Plan and 12 sector-specific plans.



Itzá Castañeda, Gender and Sustainable Development Adviser at the [Global Gender Office](#) of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature ([IUCN](#)), gave a [presentation](#) stressing the need for international and national-level work to translate down to subnational levels where negative impacts are most felt. She provided examples from Mexico, where she said there is a generally favourable environment for integrating gender in policymaking. Ms. Castañeda underscored the need to transcend gender with additional categories of analysis; she pointed out the distinctive struggles of women living in the north versus south of the country, for example, or in urban versus rural areas. One of the tools she highlighted to help ensure that national efforts to comprehensively address these concerns and coordinate national efforts was climate change Gender Action Plans, or [ccGAPS](#). The starting point for developing these plans is often a review of the legal framework, as contradictions generally exist, with women framed as a homogenous vulnerable group rather than as agents of change who face different vulnerabilities. She also cautioned against approaches that simply add the word ‘gender’ as though checking a requirement box, noting that meaningful change requires participatory design and a commitment to transparency.

In the final [presentation](#), **Jennifer Guralnick**, Programme Management Officer at the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction ([UNISDR](#))-Americas, gave an overview of the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) (DRR) and its four priorities for action: 1) understanding disaster risk, 2) strengthening governance to manage it, 3) investing in DRR for resilience, and 4) enhancing preparedness to respond effectively and “Build Back Better.” The Sendai Framework references the importance of integrating gender perspectives and engaging diverse groups including people living in poverty, people with disabilities, migrants, Indigenous peoples, and youth. To accelerate progress toward the Sendai goals, Ms. Guralnick emphasized breaking down thematic silos to build awareness of the social and context-specific factors in DRR. She spoke about various UNISDR initiatives to support these efforts, such as regional working groups on national statistics that help ensure that the same indicator can feed into various international spaces and that countries are not overburdened with reporting. Lastly, she noted that technical guidance and information for DRR governance is available to countries, as well as online platforms for reporting losses and damages and submitting questions .

In partnership with UNISDR, ParlAmericas is developing guidelines for parliamentarians to support the implementation of the Sendai Framework in their countries. This forthcoming resource will include protocols to help align legal frameworks and other legislative actions with the Sendai Framework’s four priority areas for DRR.





In the Q&A and open dialogue that followed the presentations, the parliamentarians in attendance posed questions and shared reflections from their own country contexts on the themes that were raised. The takeaways and discussion points from the session included:

- The need for gender transformative actions that challenge the unequal power relations between men and women
- The significance of the paradigm shift from “women” to “gender,” which is inclusive of the impact of gender roles on men and the greater risks they face in certain sectors and disaster contexts
- Myriad tools and structures can help to bring national policy and legal frameworks in line with international agreements and their gender provisions, but all planning must be contextually relevant, intersectional, and process-driven



Session 2: Centring Women in Climate Adaptation

Led by Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Romina Pérez** (Bolivia), this session examined parliamentary efforts in the region to better incorporate women's needs and knowledge in climate adaptation. Responding to rounds of questions in a panel conversation, parliamentarians from Trinidad and Tobago, Peru, and Haiti shared the priorities and advances underway in their countries.

Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives **Esmond Forde** (Trinidad and Tobago) spoke about the country's commitment to elevating the voices of women, youth, and marginalized communities in development and adaptation projects in Trinidad and Tobago. He said that all actions are **guided by the SDGs and principles of good governance**, which requires strong representation of women in high-level decision-making roles. Mr. Forde highlighted examples of the country's progress in women's representation in politics and in other realms. He said that while many of the current national policies are gender neutral, the recently presented [Green Paper](#) for a National Policy on Gender and Development

could in future be a mechanism for strengthened integration of gender in the [National Development Strategy: Vision 2030](#) and other policies.

Member of Congress **Ana María Choquehuanca** (Peru) next spoke about Peru's new [Framework Law on Climate Change](#) developed to visibilize and address the complexity of climate change and its gendered impacts. She explained that women in her country, particularly in Indigenous communities in the interior, play important but undervalued roles in local adaptation practices. However, they have limited access to resources, credit, education, employment, and spaces to express their ideas and aspirations; the value of their **ancestral knowledge** is furthermore overlooked. The law therefore includes a focus on citizen participation, **gender and interculturality**, and linguistically-appropriate educational campaigns. Ms. Choquehuanca also referenced Peru's [Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change](#), the first of its kind in South America. In conjunction with the law, this plan lays a foundation to ensure greater input by, and benefits for, women in climate adaptation initiatives.



Senator **Dieudonne Luma Étienne** (Haiti) spoke from her viewpoint as the only woman senator and one of only four women in the Haitian parliament. She gave context on the country's extreme vulnerability to climate impacts and disasters in relation to the social and political struggles for women's rights in Haiti. Senator Luma Étienne emphasized that while Haitian women have critical management skills for adaptation and mitigation, they experience many vulnerabilities including sexual and gender-based violence. The impunity with which this violence is met creates serious obstacles to advancing gender-responsive climate solutions. Her priorities for action focused on the **need to remove all barriers to women's political participation**, and she called for international support for this objective, referencing the power of networks like the PNGE.

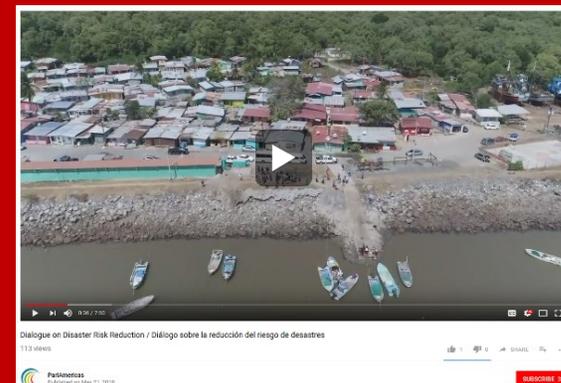
During the question period after the panel, the parliamentary delegates discussed the need to simultaneously advance women's representation in

top positions of power and to build awareness among all political actors on gender mainstreaming. There was acknowledgement of the generally slow timelines for passing legal reforms, but that on a yearly basis there are opportunities for parliamentarians to influence positive change on gender issues through their fiscal oversight roles.

The day concluded with reflections led by President of the Senate **Chester Humphrey** (Grenada), Vice-President of the PNGE for the Caribbean, and by **Lorena Barba** of UN Women, who reiterated the entry points for gender-responsive budgeting in relation to the climate topics discussed throughout the day's sessions.



During the Gathering, Member of the National Assembly **Iris Betancourt Téllez** (Cuba) introduced a new [video](#) filmed at the ParlAmericas activity “[Dialogue on Disaster Risk Reduction](#),” which was carried out in collaboration with UNISDR in Panama City in February 2018. This video includes short interviews with the parliamentary delegates and subject matter specialists who attended, as well as footage from a field visit and briefing with the National Civil Protection System of Panama ([SINAPROC](#)).



Session 3: Gender, Health, and Climate Change: Promoting Responsive and Sustainable Planning

The panel of specialists in the final session was moderated by **Nicole Olivierre**, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries (Trinidad and Tobago). Each panellist spoke about initiatives to ensure that the differential health impacts of climate change are being measured and taken into consideration in national healthcare and disaster response planning.

Farmala Jacobs, Executive Director of the [Directorate of Gender Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda](#), gave a [presentation](#) on the Directorate's experience responding to Hurricane Irma, and later, providing assistance to Dominica after Hurricane Maria. With the support of UN Women, UNFPA, and community groups, the Directorate distributed **dignity kits** that included supplies sometimes overlooked, like sanitary or incontinence pads, toilet paper, deodorant, and condoms. The

Directorate also contributed to post-disaster needs assessments in shelters, providing recommendations on preventing and addressing gender-based violence through strengthened capacity of shelter workers, first responders, and health professionals. Ms. Jacobs explained the importance of promoting awareness and continual improvements of the **referral pathway** which directs survivors of violence to support services from different entry points. Among other areas for improvement, she mentioned greater inter-agency and inter-ministerial coordination, campaigns to promote existing services and monitor their impact, and integration of a gender lens in **early warning systems, procedures, and communications**. Finally, she stressed that gender-based violence must be recognized as a public health issue.



Next, **Aurora Noguera-Ramkissoon**, Liaison Officer for the UNFPA Caribbean Subregional Office for Trinidad and Tobago, gave a [presentation](#) on UNFPA's work in the context of disasters and humanitarian crises, applying a human rights approach aligned with the [Programme of Action](#) of the International Conference on Population and Development. She described some of their critical activities, which include improving data availability and analysis for response and recovery plans, as well as emergency sexual and reproductive health services. For instance, **Minimum Initial Service Packages** delivered within 48 hours of a crisis help prevent or manage the consequences of sexual violence, HIV transmission, and maternal and newborn mortality. All of these issues can peak significantly during disasters or conflicts and be exacerbated by long-term challenges in the region such as chronic violence, and population displacement and migration. Ms. Noguera-Ramkissoon also provided an overview of the value of population data throughout the phases of a humanitarian crisis. Baseline data, for instance, is crucial for contingency planning based on models of risk scenarios with different groups, and for mapping needs and capacities for resettlement.

Providing a perspective from South America, the [presentation](#) by **Ana Carolina Ogando**, Research Associate at Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing ([WIEGO](#)) focused on health risks for women in the informal economy. Ms. Ogando discussed WIEGO's *Cuidar* project in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, an exploratory risk mapping designed with **participatory action** research principles. The project revealed numerous health risks facing informal waste pickers and, through focus groups and other methods, captured their agency and inputs on how to improve safety, health, dignity, and quality of life. The findings revealed common concerns among waste pickers: the lack of ventilation and infrastructure in dumps and recycling centres, exposure to extreme temperatures and toxic substances, sexual violence by authorities, and socio-economic and psychological stresses worsened by climate impacts like flooding, heatwaves, and vector-borne diseases (e.g. Zika). Health risks furthermore showed gendered and racialized trends, evidencing the need for solutions that capture intersecting inequalities. Concluding with policy recommendations, Ms. Ogando highlighted the workers' contributions to environmental conservation and the value of their decentralized knowledge for policy making.



Lastly, in her [presentation](#), Catharina Cuellar, Gender and Health Advisor for the Pan-American Health Organization ([PAHO](#)), outlined the slow and uneven progress on health and gender equality outcomes across the region. One of PAHO's priorities is therefore addressing the intersecting social determinants of health, ranging from decent work and education to racial equality and access to land. Since 2005, PAHO has had a [Gender Equality Policy](#) approved by all member states. Among other objectives, it aims to achieve the best possible health according to the different needs of population groups, and to remove barriers to accessing health services. PAHO also has a [Plan of Action for DRR 2016-2021](#) to orient governance and capacity building for disaster risk management in the health sector. Ms. Cuellar stressed that executing these types of policies and plans requires investments in health to build system-wide **resilience**, or the ability of health actors, institutions, and populations to prepare for and absorb disturbances and provide needed services in a timely manner. She characterized this as an important part of moving towards PAHO's objectives of **universal health access** and **universal coverage**.



Working groups

The second half of this session provided an opportunity for parliamentarians to engage in smaller group discussions on the nexus between climate, gender, and health. Facilitated by ParlAmericas' Director General **Alisha Todd**, this activity grouped the delegates at roundtables, each of which examined the direct and indirect social impacts of different phenomenon related to climate change, disasters, or another form of environmental destruction. With topics including flooding, earthquakes, sea-level rise, wildfires, and water contamination, the delegates assessed potential health impacts from an intersectional gender lens. They also discussed legislative responses, taking into consideration distinctive contextual factors (cultural, environmental, political, or historical) for different countries in the region.



The final **declaration** was presented and read by the Honourable **Mobina Jaffer** (Canada), and the discussion and approval process was moderated by the Honourable **Bridgid Annisette-George**, Speaker of the House of Representatives (Trinidad and Tobago).

Among the commitments made in the declaration by the parliamentary delegations are:

- Promoting gender mainstreaming in parliamentary work on climate action, and the development of national budgetary tools and policies to consider the different impacts of spending and taxation on women, men, and traditionally marginalized groups as relevant to national contexts.
- Fostering a political environment that is conducive to gender-responsive implementation of international climate change agreements and action plans, supported by national-level policy frameworks and transparent and inclusive consultation processes.
- Encouraging our governments and legislatures to conduct gender-sensitive national and subnational assessments on health risks associated with climate change to strengthen public sector responses to the specific vulnerabilities of different population groups.
- Promoting collaboration between national and regional stakeholders such as local women's organizations, scientific bodies and academia, private sector and government agencies in order to find common solutions to climate change challenges and actions to address them.

We invite parliamentarians to communicate all actions related to these and any other commitments made at ParlAmericas events. Progress will be recorded and presented at forthcoming meetings with all member parliaments.

PARLIAMENTS PRESENT



ANTIGUA AND
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BELIZE



BOLIVIA



CANADA



CHILE



CUBA



ECUADOR



EL
SALVADOR



GRENADA



GUATEMALA



GUYANA



HAITI



HONDURAS



JAMAICA



MEXICO



PARAGUAY



PERU



ST. KITTS
AND NEVIS



ST. LUCIA



ST. VINCENT AND
THE GRENADINES



SURINAME



TRINIDAD AND
TOBAGO



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Canada

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

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