



SEVENTH PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY FORUM OF THE AMERICAS (FIPA)

Mexico City, Mexico
November, 2010

MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS

FINAL REPORT

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The meeting of the working group of women parliamentarians of the Americas took place in the seat of the Mexican Congress in Mexico City on Wednesday the 17th and Thursday the 18th of November, 2010, with the participation of delegates from Canada, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago, Dominica, Mexico, Chile and Ecuador.

Assembly Member Linda Machuca Moscoso of Ecuador chaired the Group's sessions.

PRESENTATIONS

The Working Group heard a presentation by Gloria Young, Director of the Centre for Gender Studies and Competencies. Her presentation and the ensuing discussion are summarized below:

Ms. Gloria Young

The subject of Ms. Young's presentation will be [sic] progress, difficulties and challenges with respect to political and electoral participation by Afro-Caribbean women.

Ms. Young remarked that the historical relationship of women with respect to their gender, due to their ethnic-racial origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disabilities or the rural or urban environment in which they live, has been the subject of many studies. International bodies have recognized the inequality in which many populations live, such as black women, which constitutes a significant political development.

Women face several kinds of discrimination.

Ms. Young noted that international tools play an important role in human development, which includes Afro-Caribbean and indigenous women. It is important to mention that since 1948, when the Convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide was approved, which gave rise in 1963 to the Declaration on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, a full series of international legal actions has been carried out that has promoted the creation and strengthening of ethnic women's networks at the international level.

In 1966, March 21st was declared International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights were approved.



Although the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid was approved in 1973, which led to the First Decade of the Fight against Racism and Racial Discrimination (1973-1982) and the First World Conference to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination in 1978 in Geneva, the Afro-Caribbean women's identity movements still continue with courage, demands for public policy specific to their sector.

It is important to mention that the exclusion of Afro-descendant women in the Americas marks a different phase [sic] as the result of so many international conventions, covenants and conferences.

With the inauguration of the Second World Conference to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, held in 1983 in Geneva, multiculturalism as a social and global phenomenon, imposed a different dynamic on the issue of exclusion.

By the end of the Second Decade of the Fight against Racism and Racial Discrimination (1983 [sic]-1992) and beginning of the Third Decade of the Fight against Racism and Racial Discrimination (1994-2003), Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latin American women, in their various approaches to organization and mobilization, had already decided to help search for a sense of belonging—the affirmation of a cultural identity.

Ms. Young emphasized a new perspective on the horizon, as the Conferences to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance were part of a commitment by more than 100 States to confirm the urgent need for action not only on the topic of apartheid, but also on the topic of discrimination by virtue of race and gender, and intolerance.

To achieve personal and political empowerment, both Afro-Caribbean and indigenous women must not only have the same leadership abilities as any other leader; they must also deal with racial stereotypes.

Leadership: The same leadership ability as any other person, while dealing with political favouritism and the opinion vote.

Intercultural Dialogue: To go beyond ethnic discourse, making the ethnic space visible and strengthening it in electoral politics, and seeking balance between the contributions of multiculturalism and the electoral and political fields. *Common Thread*. Common interests for dialogue.

Time: Now is the time to make decisions. Time has caught up with us and we are learning to raise funds.

Alliances with the women's movement, with open groups of feminists, with collective expressions that contribute to building a more egalitarian, democratic and pluralist society, with the Network of Afro-Latin American and Afro-Caribbean Women, in which organizations and black women from more than thirty countries in the Region are involved; and with the Network of Indigenous Women. Building alliances with civic associations and with organized local ethnic groups in the countries is a very important aspect of reaction. In this way, differences are recognized and appreciated, and even extended. Homogeneity is giving way to marvelous heterogeneity, of which Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latin Americans and Indigenous women are a part.



It is important to know that a new political cultural is being imposed. While for many years the male protagonists of political power imposed a captive economics policy, authoritarian policy; centralist policy, that has deprived democratic systems of content, the people now need a new leadership style. Another type of politician is required if democracy is to be strengthened and expanded in the countries. There are great opportunities for women in this area.

Reversing contempt, negation, stereotyping and discrimination through effective wins in elections: – in this area, image is important-- but women in politics must develop a discourse and draw attention through that discourse. Similarly, that discourse combines a work plan, a political project and an ideological vision.

With respect to the discourse on multiculturalism, this has been surpassed by all of the country's problems, by the universe of globalization. Producing a discourse on differences, from the woman's point of view. This must be a discourse based on inclusion that reinforces the ethnic movement effectively and permanently.

The culturalist discourse should not confuse us. Different political discourse based on ethnicity may be rejected (indeed it is in many of our societies). It is more a matter of producing a discourse on difference from the perspective of women. We know more than anyone how to call people to dialogue and how to listen. We call upon people to join in our projects and, in general, try not to feel resentment. We are prone to forgiving (though not forgetting) and for that reason, we feel freer to call our opponents to the table for work or dialogue.

Ms. Young reiterated that women are inclusive and that that attitude is needed in the politics of today. Traditional politicians are quite happy to “pass the buck” and undermine their internal or external adversaries and even pressure groups. Women have a higher degree of tolerance and for that reason can make calls with greater ease, rather than reject opinions or actions not initiated by us.

Women are needed in politics, because they naturally tend to be inclusive. Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latin American and indigenous women, rather than attracting by reminding others of racial stigma, attract by appealing to a political and social project from their own leadership and experience, and so, slowly but surely, as we women know how, we will win more votes, more confidence among voters, and work without wavering at the necessary strengthening of the ethnic movement, with much more effectiveness and permanence.

Mrs. Linda Machuca Moscoso

The Chair of the Women's Group then reported on the meeting held in Quito, Ecuador, on August 11th and 12th, 2010, which was attended by 45 women parliamentarians from 16 countries in the Americas who analyzed the topic: “Women in Power: A Challenge for the 21st Century”. She also mentioned the publication of a book containing the proceedings of this event with the experiences, developments and best practices along the road to the inclusion of women within politics, as well as the Quito Declaration, which mentions some provisions from the event. These can be consulted on FIPA's Website. “The Ten Commandments of Women Politicians for Communication”, were cited to generate spaces and formulate ideas and contributions by women parliamentarians.



DISCUSSIONS

The participants discussed issues related to the current situation of women's participation in politics, the family issues that they face, as well as roles and the issue of confidence in their abilities and the right to act as political representatives of men and women. The participants shared alternatives for resolution that have been carried out in their countries, as well as alternatives to improve and facilitate the active participation of women in politics.

THE GROUP OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS

WHEREAS

- The purpose of the FIPA Women's Group is to strengthen political women's leadership through ongoing regional exchange; to promote the creation of conditions for equal opportunities, giving priority to fighting poverty and eliminating labour discrimination; to strengthen democracies in the Americas to ensure respect for human rights and the conditions that promote equal and sustainable social development; to encourage the creation of mechanisms that promote women's participation in politics; to strengthen active participation by women in FIPA working meetings, including the gender perspective on each topic analyzed by the organization".
- The Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas meets annually to discuss a special topic to be discussed at the FIPA forum.
- On November 17th and 18th 2010, a working meeting was held in Mexico on analysis of the discrimination and double discrimination suffered by indigenous and Afro-descendant women in the Americas, and how these aspects are a constant feature in the participation of legislators from different latitudes.
- On August 11th and 12th, 2010, a meeting of women parliamentarians from the Americas entitled "Women in Power: Challenges for the 21st Century" was held in Ecuador. The following commitments expressed in the Final Declaration were assumed at that event:
 1. To strengthen parliamentary actions and increase their impact so as to make sustained progress towards the actual realization of women's rights.
 2. To ensure transversal inclusion of the gender perspective in legislative efforts, and in each and every bill of law, to improve the positioning of women's rights and eliminate any form of exclusion.
 3. To promote constitutional reforms so that internal legislation is in keeping with international instruments in favor of women, such as the Belem do Pará Convention, CEDAW, and the Beijing Platform, in order to overcome application inconsistencies.
 4. To commit our parliaments to proposals in favour of women and equality between men and women as the only way to encourage social transformation.
 5. To strengthen the empowerment of women through integration with other parliamentarians and other women's organizations, within and outside the country, to work supportively and share experiences, knowledge and proposals.



6. To do our legislative work under the principles of a secular State and ethics for the purpose of enacting laws and for supervising actions for the benefit of all women based on their diversity and specificity.
 7. To call upon the competent authorities to ratify, subscribe and comply with international instruments on the rights of girls, teenage girls and women.
 8. To create mechanisms to increase women's participation in substantial progress on equality between women and men in private spaces, so that they share domestic responsibilities and so that women have more free time to participate actively and more fully enjoy the rights that are restricted by double and triple workdays.
 9. To share the legislative and supervisory work of the parliaments with women's organizations and organized civil society, to allow for true citizen participation and accountability.
 10. To audit public bodies on the enforcement of women's rights, in regard to their capacities.
 11. To guarantee equal access by men and women to media processes, while eliminating sexist and discriminatory content through a committed approach to the full exercise of women's rights, their dissemination and defence.
- We recognize that the lack of participation by women in politics, and in these spaces of discussion will not be resolved with childcare support only. We therefore need to promote co-responsibility between parents, especially as a means of cooperating with women in their different tasks related to work and the family.
 - We must prepare the issues for a new Meeting of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas in 2011.
 - We are planning activities of the parliamentary group for 2011.

Basing itself on the deliberations of the Working Group on November 17th and 18th that took place at the Seventh Assembly of the Interparliamentary Forum of the Americas in Mexico City, and on the conclusions reached by that group, THE GROUP OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS makes the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Create a network of political women to support and assist those who participated in the past, and who are participating today in popular election forums with a view to designing empowerment strategies, starting by removing obstacles to effective electoral participation and taking advantage of the political capital accumulated by women who have served in parliament.**
2. **Organize, through FIPA, an international school of political training to build skills among women parliamentarians in order to achieve quality parliamentary writs from a gender perspective, in which women parliamentarians develop the skills necessary to draft bills of law that have an impact on their countries and on the to monitor those bills, and to design methods for effective communication with voters, the development of messages, work with the media and other relevant issues of parliamentary development.**
3. **Request that at future events, the agenda of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas establish equal importance for the analysis of gender issues in parliamentarian**



meetings, particularly in regard to time management, methodology and promotion of participation.

4. Update the issues to be discussed at the Women's Meetings, going beyond situational analysis to focus on proposals and strategies.
5. Implement actions so that the FIPA Women's Group can establish a closer relationship with other related parliamentary organizations.
6. Fully subscribe the content of the Quito Declaration issued by the Group of Women Parliamentarians in August 2010.
7. Supervise the implementation of public policies instituted by our countries that contribute to reconciling domestic and unpaid work with work in public spaces.
8. Promote new educational practices in our countries so that new generations change their practices and the roles that have been exclusively assigned to women.
9. Organize other activities in addition to the annual meeting of the FIPA Women's Group in the different countries.
10. Build and strengthen the relationships between women parliamentarians in the Americas and networks of Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latin American and Diaspora women, as well as with networks of indigenous women, in order to discuss, exchange and evaluate the situation of discrimination, violation of human rights, poverty and cultural subordination experienced by women in Latin America and the Caribbean.
11. Develop follow-up actions for commitments and recommendations assumed by the participants in the parliamentary group.

PARTICIPANTS

COUNTRY		NAME
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