



# *Women in power: challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*

GROUP OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS FIPA

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**GROUP OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS  
FIPA**

**PRESIDENT**

Linda Machuca Moscoso

**FINAL PROJECT DOCUMENTATION**

Gayne Villagómez

Sandra Álvarez

**EDITORIAL COORDINATION AND PHOTOGRAPHY**

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*GROUP OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS FIPA*

Assembly Member Linda Machuca Moscoso  
**PRESIDENT**

Quito, 11-12 August 2010





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## Background

### *Women in Power Meeting: Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

GROUP OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS FIPA

The Group of Women Parliamentarians held a meeting under the name “*Women in Power: Challenges for the XXI Century*”. Linda Machuca, Ecuadorean Assembly Member for the migrant community of the United States and Canada, elected President of the Group of Women Parliamentarians in September 2009, led the organization of the meeting, which was attended by women delegates from 16 countries in the Americas.

The Group of Women Parliamentarians was created in 2003 for the purpose of strengthening the leadership of women parliamentarians in the Americas, their democratic participation and the development of initiatives with a view to contributing towards equality of conditions between men and women. The Group is part of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas – FIPA, an independent network comprising national parliaments from all 35 OAS Member States, the aim of which is promoting inter-parliamentary participation in the Inter-American system, and contributing to dialogue regarding issues in the hemispheric agenda.

Said event was held in Quito, Ecuador, at the National Assembly, on 11 and 12 August this year. It was aimed at further developing women parliamentarians’ political skills from a gender and human rights perspective. The meeting followed an agenda which was developed based on the current scenario in the Americas and the status of women’s rights, classified under the following themes:

- Exercising Power: The Experience of a Woman Politician.
- Current Situation of Women’s Rights in the Americas: A Critical Look at National Legislatures.
- Women Politicians and the Media.

First-order speakers with expertise in women’s human rights, their progress and setbacks, and with broad experience in the political exercise and in contexts of policy-making favouring women, shared their valuable experiences with the participating women parliamentarians, and engaged in a mutually-enlightening dialogue.

## Fifth Meeting of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas

13-15 September 2009, Ottawa, Canada.

The Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas held its Fifth Meeting on 13-15 September 2009, in Ottawa, Canada with the participation of men and women parliamentarians from 17 countries in the Americas. Canadian Senator Céline Hervieux-Payette, former President of FIPA, chaired the meeting.

The presentation by the keynote speaker, the Honourable Lynn Holowesko, President of the Senate of the Association of Caribbean States, highlighted that each gender makes a contribution that will lead to balancing governance in an increasingly complex society. Mrs. Holowesko pointed out that Parliaments in the Americas are seeing slow progress in achieving equal representation of women, and that some countries have no elected women parliamentarians.

At that meeting, the new President of FIPA’s Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas was elected at a special session held on 15 September 2009. Mrs. Linda Machuca Moscoso, member of the National Assembly of Ecuador, was elected to replace Colombian Senator Cecilia López, upon conclusion of her term of office.

On the basis of deliberations during the Fifth Meeting of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, held within

the Framework of the Sixth Plenary Assembly of FIPA, the Assembly made the following **recommendations**:

1. That legislative measures be implemented to ensure equal representation of men and women in parliaments in the Americas.
2. That women parliamentarians in the Americas participate fully in the legislative process, moving beyond social and educational issues to deal with matters involving the economy, defence, security, etc.
3. That parliaments in the Americas work together to ensure that crimes such as rape, sexual abuse, family violence, etc., face sanctions when their perpetrators cross borders.
4. That women parliamentarians become interested in strengthening alliances and solidarity networks with women groups.

Recognizing the importance of the Congress called “*Towards a Gender-Sensitive Legislative Agenda for Development in the Americas*”, held by the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas in Bogotá, Colombia on 20-21 November, 2008, the Plenary Assembly recommends:

- Endorsing the recommendations adopted by parliamentarians gathered at the Congress “*Towards a Gender-Sensitive Legislative Agenda for Development in the Americas*”; and
- Inviting FIPA Member Parliaments to report on progress made in the implementation of these recommendations at the next Plenary Meeting of FIPA.





Opening Address by Assembly Member  
Linda Machuca Moscoso  
President of the Group of Women Parliamentarians  
of the Americas

In the past few days we have celebrated the first displays of our people's rebellion and love for freedom. Quito, the Light of the Americas, finds the *raison d'être* for its national constitution in the liberation exploit dating back some two hundred years. From this space of dignity and love to this great Motherland, the New Continent, may I warmly welcome you all and wish that our work present us with significant challenges in the struggle we still face within each of our countries and peoples.

Even today, six out of every ten women suffer from systematic intra-family violence in Ecuador. And if we believe there are many forms of violence, then the figures multiply due to the abuse suffered by women at their work or study places. These figures are repeated here and elsewhere and leave us with the following question: How much have we actually progressed in the pursuit of our rights? What good is any type of power to us if it is not to rescue and make us into subjects full with rights, respect and dignity?

The *burqa*, as has been rightly said, is not only an ancient Muslim custom, but a fabric prison which limits vision and movement and which captures the gaze and the body; it is a lattice... Many Afghan women turn to suicide in the pursuit of the peace of the grave rather than being subjected – on account of unconceivable “violations” – to lapidation, amputation, flagellation or public executions. It is these same women who are vulnerable to being traded or bequeathed, even when they have no right to their spouses' assets when they die, regardless of the fact that, together with their families, they are left in a desperate state of indigence.

It is not only in far away lands where such prisons exist, however. This is why the stance that women have taken, that of claiming for their rights persists in today's world as a key to democracy and to the respect for human rights, even more so when the agenda of this meeting relates to women in power or the powers that these women have already conquered. What good are they? Why do we work from the positions of power we have attained?

It is equally imperative to re-examine key concepts such as equality or the principle of equity within a democratic society. Have we really overcome discrimination? Is the political participation of women respected under equal conditions? In this very room we are honoured with the presence of representatives from different peoples and human collectives who perhaps do not feel duly represented in their parliaments, and too frequently this sentiment is extended to those women's collectives who suffer discrimination twice as much. The richness of the Americas is represented here, and this ethnic and natural richness demands of us greater efforts for recognition, as well as challenges for development.

All this poses some direct questions to us, women parliamentarians, in each of our countries: Whom do we serve? Whom do we work for? How often do we give priority to women's claims, especially of those who live under conditions of vulnerability, if not invisibility? But also, men of conscience, sensitivity and commitment can no longer be the exception when it comes to aligning the best values with our struggle, acknowledging the subjugation and discrimination that we women have historically

suffered from. I therefore wish to acknowledge the presence of men parliamentarians present here with us today and who will continue to participate during this meeting.

Hundreds of women are being murdered in Juárez and no one is ever brought to account for this; the greatest power these criminals have is negation, concealment and certainly impunity for their crimes. Which are the rates of femicide in our countries? How frequently do they murder us women in an attempt to control us? How frequently do they continue to incarcerate us behind burqas or behind conceptions that downplay us on an ongoing basis?

This must be the opportunity to empower us, and for this reason we have come up with topics which relate to the experiences women politicians have had. Just to mention only a number of the many topics that bring us together and which we hope are important tools, we shall attempt to establish a critical balance of national legislations; we shall assess all positive actions which favour women's participations and we shall not disregard the great intercultural diversity of our countries.

We will pay special attention during this meeting to the experience of the distinguished speakers here. Let me also take this opportunity to thank the financial support provided by the Canadian Agency for International Development, as well as the Honourable Municipality of the Metropolitan District of Quito, the Canada-based Kinross-Aurelian Company, UNIFEM and the Parliamentarian Group for Women's Rights of the National Assembly of Ecuador, in organizing this event.



In other latitudes, and under other circumstances, it would probably be impossible to even think of the agenda prepared for this meeting. We can weigh up this small satisfaction; however, all will have proven useless if you do not leave here with your suitcases filled with the new challenges that certain spaces of power present us with, renewed with

revised roles and with a different approach as to how to exercise them, thus claiming responsibility for all that we women do right... and even, at times, beyond any possible improvement.

Let's get to work!



Address by Architect Fernando Cordero Cueva,  
President of the National Assembly of Ecuador

### Against 'machocracy'

Emile Durkheim, one of the greatest thinkers at the beginning of the twentieth century and a founder of Sociology, was of the opinion that the gender difference lied in the proximity to the natural status. Durkheim affirmed that men would be more estranged from nature due to their commitment to science, to war, to politics, and this determined their identity as civilized individuals, who were better socialized, the product of the progress of culture and the consolidation of society.

Women, on the other hand, in Durkheim's line of thinking, due to the fact that they remained linked to their reproductive nature, to the family and to child rearing, were the surplus of the status of nature. As can be easily inferred, Durkheim's ideas still maintained the surplus of that age-old conception of a sexist and restrictive citizenship which was first seen in Ancient Greece and which, unfortunately, dominated western social thinking for centuries.

Reality is different now since it is irrefutable that the biological role women play continues to be superior to that of their male counterparts and, for this reason, it is an erroneous conception to think that the natural responsibility of women must become '*more manageable*' through the processes of socialization and education, which allows dominant men to exert their coercive might over women.

These ideas surrounding the family, modesty, sexuality and love were conveyed to women from childhood, not only to reinforce

their role as mothers and wives, but also to subordinate them to *'machocracy'*. Thus, much to the contrary of Durkheim's ideas, it is women who are 'socialized', it is you who on account of the ontological conformation of your gender, exert a determinant social influence.

It is for these reasons that the inveterate and unjust subordination of women, the sexism to the detriment of women's dignity, the political relegation being imposed on them despite the ongoing democratic claims -social practices which we men had witnessed, albeit mute and even little sympathetic- in not so remote times, triggered its decline during the last century when the revolutionary processes triumphed in Europe and social thinking placed the emphasis on the differences, amongst which we have those related to gender.

Women, who throughout the times never did give in, deepened the open defence over their postponed rights, claimed their due social role, demanded responsibility over the transformational struggle, initiated by their own right their exercise of politics and they enlisted themselves in the struggle for political power. Thus, in the dawn of the 21st century, we are all witnesses to events such as this present meeting, where we do not discuss the presence of women in politics as if it were a one-off event, but rather the ever increasing and unperturbed presence of women in the exercise of power.

However paradoxical these claims from the beginning of the past century may seem, in Ecuador they originated in the

poorest of strata in Ecuadorean society: The indigenous groups. This circumstance can be explained both in terms of the very condition of extreme poverty of our ancestral peoples, as in terms of the influence the October Revolution had, which located the economic and social claims of urban and rural workers at the core of all political and social struggles. It should therefore not be surprising that one the major pillars in the struggle of Ecuadorean indigenous women during last century was Dolores Cacuango, the organizer of Ecuador's First Indigenous Congress and co-founder of the Workers' Confederation of Ecuador (Confederación de Trabajadores del Ecuador, CTE), as well as Tránsito Amaguaña, who fought for salary increases, the eight-hour work day and six-day work week, for the abolition of tithes and for the restoration of *huasipungos* (small plots of land) which had been destroyed by the landowners.

But the *mestizo* world was also present at this stage of the national life of Ecuador. Nela Martínez, the unscathed defender of women's rights and the organizer of the *'Alianza Femenina Ecuatoriana'* (the Ecuadorean Women's Alliance) an alternate to the incumbent senator for the workers, shares the honour in the collective memory together with Matilde Hidalgo Navarro, the first woman to graduate from high school and first ever female doctor in the country after a long and painful struggle to attain the rights to middle and higher education for women, and with Zoila Ugarte de Landívar, a leading journalist, who founded the first women's magazine in the country under the title *'La Mujer'* ('Woman') as well as the Anticlerical Women's Centre in Quito, to name just three examples.

Countries in Latin America are all prolific in women who fight for their emancipation and the emancipation of all. In Bolivia, beyond feminism, Domitila Chungara, the daughter of miners in Potosí, also illiterate in her early life like Dolores Cacuango and Tránsito Amaguaña, stands in her own right. That great Bolivian woman has taught us with her biblical paraphrasing that woman was created neither from men's feet to be subordinated to them, nor from their heads to be over and above them. Domitila teaches us that woman was created by a man's ribs to be his mate in life and in his struggle.

It was she who taught us that if we want to free ourselves, transform the world and make inroads, we must overcome the fear which had been inculcated in us from times immemorial, so that we can turn it into *'our main enemy'*. An enemy which women defeat ever more, with all the might and tenderness they embody.

Under the light shed by these women, and by many others not included here, there is an ever increasing number of women in the Americas, and throughout the world, who join the struggle to transform reality, the open political struggle, convinced of Eduardo Galeano's words: *"Even though we cannot guess what the world will be, we can certainly imagine the world as we want it to be."* This participation is further deepened with the formation of women's collectives in various countries across the Americas.

Today, a product of the historical legacy of all the abovementioned women and others in equal or greater degree, of the long

pathway of claims that women have taken on in the Americas and throughout the world, on account of the type of organization they have undertaken, strengthened and consolidated, we have today women who exercise power, who participate in the most important decision-making processes to build a better future for our nations, even in the highest levels of power: Michelle Bachelet in Chile or Laura Chinchilla in Costa Rica, are all perfect examples of this.

The political history of Ecuador, like that of other countries in the Americas, does not yet herald the good news of Chile or Costa Rica, but indeed speaks of the ever increasing presence of women in politics. It speaks to us of the right path we have embarked ourselves on in our pursuit to eliminate the very prejudices of politics, ever so masculine and excluding, which prevented women from being present, or simply, from exercising this right.

Clear signs are the presence of an ever increasing number of women at the National Assembly or in the highest positions of the Ecuadorean Executive, as the product of a clear plan, of a clear egalitarian but compelling decision, as the acknowledgment that without you women, it is not possible to transform our reality.

For this reality to further deepen in the country and in all countries across the Americas, we are certain that of particular significance is the present meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas, under the auspices of the National Assembly of Ecuador, in which women parliamentarians will:



- Review the rights of women in this continent.
- Present their critical analysis of national legislations.
- Discuss political experience from the perspective of women's diversity.
- Assess the implementation of positive actions to improve women's participation, specifically in relation to cases in Ecuador and Bolivia.
- Share experiences in the exercise of power from the perspective of women politicians' experiences.
- Analyse whether the relationship between women politicians and the media is one of conflict; and

- Define setbacks and challenges facing the Group of Women Parliamentarians in the Americas and their future actions.

These are all tasks which we are certain you shall bring to their full completion over the coming days of hard work awaiting you. I wish you success in the work you have set out for yourselves, fellow women parliamentarians in the Americas. Remember that we are your fellow travellers in your struggle to transform all our unjust realities. Long live Women throughout the Americas! Down with Machocracy!



**Palabras de la Senadora  
Céline Hervieux-Payette  
Comité Ejecutivo - FIPA**

Ecuador demonstrates its interest in strengthening the role of women in parliaments in the Americas. This attitude highlights the vision and the commitment this country has in matters which have been often ignored.

The Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, which is part of the FIPA, was established in 2003 with the purpose of strengthening the role of women involved in politics, as well as their democratic participation in the continent, in order to foster equality between men and women. The President of this FIPA pillar is also a member of our Executive Committee. She leads the work of our forum to make inroads into our cause, a matter to which we give increasing attention.

We meet this week because we must strengthen the role of women in society. Despite all efforts made by countries in our region, we must continue to advance, support and demonstrate new ways of working in the field of politics. Unlike men, we cannot approach politics in the same manner they do. Reinforcing the role of women in politics means much more than having full access and complete political representation. We must change and improve politics in general, so that it can also represent our values and our priorities. These changes will reflect our own particular way of seeing power.

Traditionally, power was something which one accumulated. Women were denied power and, thus, we understood the situation of everyone who lacks power in society: Children, youth, the poor and the elderly, are all major social sectors who lack power and are often forgotten.

Women think of power as a means to serving society. That is, power must be used and shared for the benefit of those who have traditionally lacked it. For this reason, women must be present in the world of politics to deal with matters which men do not see to.

We are also meeting in this beautiful National Assembly because Ecuador is a leading country in terms of the progress it has made for women in parliamentary life. Women's representation in the Canadian Senate is very similar to that of the National Assembly of Ecuador. And it is approximately ten per cent higher than that in the House of Commons in Canada. However, what makes Ecuador stand out is the legislative guarantee of a minimum representation in the hands of women, in which ethnic and cultural representation is taken into account and which is increased by five per cent in each general election until representative parity is achieved. This legislation is highly progressive and audacious given the current power structure. But for women it represents smart politics.

For the current structure of power, equality of representation may be sufficient – perhaps more than sufficient. But, as we all know and shall discuss, equality of representation is but the beginning. Following this, we must implement policies and adopt legislation based on our own principles that are for the good of all society.

We have a commitment to policies relating to women. My determination is to achieve equality and parity so that women involved in politics can advance our causes.

At the Canadian Senate, I have introduced and defended a number of bills to attain equity for women at the executive boards of publicly traded companies, as well as in financial institutions and state-owned firms. I have also fought for an amendment to the Penal Code so that our country can demonstrate a greater respect for children and work further to decrease violence in our society.

Women are active participants in the business world and play an important role in the market as consumers. For this reason, there should be equal representation of women in the management of Canadian corporations.

In terms of children's education, we are still implementing physical punishment, to which I am entirely opposed. Science and civilised society also oppose to it. This may be a delicate subject, but we are here to openly address issues which men would not ordinarily tackle. And with this, I do not mean to say that men should not be included in the debate.

In politics and in life alike, men and women complement each other and, in fact, there are men who are indeed furthering many of the causes which are important to us women. The President of Brazil, Lula da Silva, is one such example. Real and concrete measures are being taken under the public welfare system reform in Brazil to combat poverty, famine and lack of education.

Combating malnutrition, alleviating poverty and improving education in a country the size and complexity of Brazil is no easy

task. However, there is no doubt whatsoever that it is a fair struggle and that efforts undertaken in this regard will make Brazil to become a better country, enjoying benefits in every respect. Social issues may perhaps be the first area of interest attributed to women in politics.

Us women can and must play key roles in all public domains, and we must contribute all necessary changes in the field of public policy. In relation to public expenditure, we must participate in this debate, intervene in the decision-making process and take on the responsibility for rehabilitating public financing. In the context of good governance, like all leaders in the region, women must also take note of public demonstrations against corruption.

All of us present here consider corruption as unacceptable, and we women must fight against this blight. In the domain of diplomacy – be it parliamentary diplomacy, as it is our case, or diplomacy in the hands of the executive branch – women must be represented in diplomatic delegations, and this is something which we must achieve both for women and for the benefit of society at large.

I would like to recall one goal we set ourselves at a previous meeting of FIPA, in which we called on governments to openly and expressly demonstrate that women and their opinions should be officially integrated into the national budgeting process. The idea behind this policy is to bring in a balance in public expenditure. Although national and international instances support and promote equality, we must work for these intentions to become expenditure policies. I trust that government leaders present here today, and who are cognizant of our meeting, will support and adopt this goal.

Lastly, we are here today because men and women parliamentarians must work for the good of society, and not for the interests of the *elite*. Today, our Group gathers again, a meeting so long overdue, to advance the cause of women in society and in parliaments. We cannot overlook this opportunity: We must take concrete measures. Let us remember that the opportunity to meet is rare and a valuable occasion which ends all too quickly. This week we have an excellent opportunity to make a significant statement. Let's seize it!

Thank you very much and I wish you all an excellent and productive meeting.



**Address by Dr. Silvia Vega Ugalde**  
**UNIFEM-Ecuador Delegate**

For UNIFEM-Andean Region it is a high honour, and a welcome opportunity, to address you all at this opening session of this important meeting of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, an event which highlights the importance of the opportunities to meet and debate for people like you, who are working in the field of parliamentary politics, as women citizens in the exercise of power who approach significant challenges, as evidenced by the name chosen for this meeting.

The different levels of access for women to be elected as parliamentarians have seen an increase over the last few years in Latin America. Undoubtedly the laws which enshrine affirmative action measures to help promote candidates have been a clear contribution to this achievement.

In this regard, it is therefore important to ask ourselves to what extent democracy has been strengthened thanks to the increased presence of women Representation has certainly improved, since parliaments are better expressing the composition of the population, where more than half are women. Parliamentary agendas have diversified to include issues not previously present in the interests of politicians. Perhaps some styles of politics have changed; perhaps new segments of society can now express themselves through new voices which have moved from less traditional spaces to the parliament. All this means, for sure, a democratization of politics.

But to what extent has the life of women also been democratized thanks to the greater political participation of a few? This is yet another question that emerges and what we can offer by

way of response, particularly in the light of the criteria of the new generations, is that there are other imaginaries regarding what it means to be 'woman', which new signification is given to their contribution towards culture and society, both from the private space –traditionally assigned to women- and from the public space, in which we now find women who are managers, scientists, politicians, and not as an exception to the rule but rather as an event that is naturally accepted.

This shift presupposes, without a doubt, a transformation that is engraved in a democratizing paradigm. Nonetheless, when it comes to facing the responsibilities of both men and women in the private and public spheres, either in domestic or political contexts, we still see the manifestation of the enormous gap still existing in the division of labour, which has remained practically unaltered. The presence of more women in the political and public life in general has not resulted in men taking on all their responsibilities in the private world.

It is in this domain where there is still a long way to cover and it is here where personal cost for women who are involved in politics is greatly felt. Experience shows that the women involved in politics are those who do not have any family responsibilities, be it because they have no children or because these children are now grown-ups; in some instances, and precisely because they have children, they continue to exercise their organising and monitoring role within the family, an additional emotional burden to that experienced by any ordinary male politician who, in the discharge of his role, does not concern himself with domestic or family issues.

On the other hand, and in spite of access to political power having opened new doors to women, other barriers have not yet been fully overcome which are characteristic of the political world, amongst which are political violence or harassment, distinctive of this gender, because the way in which they are put into action to the detriment of women who seek to engage in a political career, or simply against those who hold a political position, makes use of gender factors to cause them to desist from their goals and to discredit their actions.

The political action of women parliamentarians must be analysed within the context of the transformations which the political regimes have experienced in our countries over the last few decades and which highlight the predominance of presidentialist schemes, in which the role of Parliaments is losing influence and incidence, not only in the very adoption of laws, but in the decision-making process in other contexts of the political life of our countries. This is an issue that is under the public scrutiny of political analysts and of ordinary citizens (both men and women) alike.

How much do these models contribute to political stability? How incompatible can this political stability be with the implementation of a broad and growing democracy? These are all questions being raised and answered in the light of practices we observe in each of our countries. These questions and answers are not alien to the debate surrounding the exercise of power by women in parliament, because parliaments with lesser power imply, for men and women parliamentarians alike, fewer opportunities to successfully channel their proposals.

New situations also call for new strategies for action which maximise internal alliances amongst political parties and movements in order to increase the strength of the various currents of opinion, which presupposes new skills by female political actors such as women parliamentarians, so as not to give up their positions or their political ethics in the inter-partisan game and so as not to deviate from the aims and goals that led them to their highly representative positions. In turn, it also implies the need to strengthen alliances and the ongoing relationship with other male and female stakeholders outside the parliaments, so that the institutional weakening likely to be experienced by Congresses can be mitigated insofar as they manage to genuinely express societal demands and aspirations.

When revisiting the not so short track record of women in Latin American parliaments, we see that it is indeed quite prolific in the presentation of bills and legal reforms in areas such as violence against women, political equality and/or parity, health and education, but also in the legislative contexts at large, which range from economic to environmental issues, from social security to the security of citizens, for we women are incorporated into all areas of parliamentary work, and not only into those linked to social issues identified as a source of our concerns.

However, there is a lesser (or less documented) presence of women in the area of supervision, another key role of parliaments, and which gains greater importance within the aforementioned presidentialist context. This could be better expanded to monitor national public policies, both those which are specific to women and which arise from specialist mechanisms available in the majority of States, as well as those from the ministries or other public powers, and which have a direct impact on the life of women. Perhaps it is here, in the area of supervision, where there are many challenges to think of, many strategies to be shared in relation to how to make the best use of supervisory functions, by implementing a watchful eye -that of gender- over the whole set of public actions undertaken by our States.

In short, there are many issues for debate and enrichment. We are certain that this event will provide a significant space for exchange and learning. From UNIFEM-RA we hope this is the case and that the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas may emerge from this meeting with renewed strength.



## ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS: PAPERS



# Some Thoughts on the Human Rights of Women across National Legislations in the Americas

**Ms. Roxana Arroyo**  
ILANUD RESEARCHER,  
SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA



- Lawyer, teacher, and human rights activist.
- An active member of the Feminist Movement in Latin America, she has been participating in struggles at a national, regional, and international level to advocate for women's human rights.
- Lawyer and Notary from the Universidad de Costa Rica.
- PhD in Human Rights from the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid "Instituto Bartolomé de las Casas".
- Professor at the Specialization Course in Economic Analysis of the Law and its Institutions, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid.
- Attended and delivered several courses at the Inter-American Institute of

Human Rights on topics related to Women's Human Rights and their protection in the Inter-American System, Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

- Professor at IX Interdisciplinary Course in Human Rights.
- Professor in Sociology, Universidad de Costa Rica.
- Permanent consultant for the Woman, Justice, and Gender Program of the United Nations Latin American Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, ILANUD.
- President of **Fundación Justicia y Género** (Justice and Gender Foundation).
- Visiting Professor at FLACSO – Ecuador.

- Visiting Professor at the Master's Degree in Women's Studies, Universidad de Costa Rica and Universidad Nacional.
- Professor at the Master's Degree in Social and Family Violence, Universidad Estatal a Distancia.
- Professor at the Master's Degree in Human Rights "Educating for Peace", Universidad Nacional.
- Has participated in talks, conferences, and seminars in Latin America.
- Conducts research into violence and discrimination issues.
- Has written several articles, research papers, and a book on women's human rights, discrimination, and violence.

From this perspective, the new social order must be focused on the construction of legislations that are pro women's human rights, which also sustain the construction of a new social paradigm, based on the conjugation of substantive equality and formal equality, in which the gender perspective is the spinal cord; this will lead to overcoming historical boundaries in order to move towards the construction of a true democratic state. To do this, one must combat discrimination and gender violence through the implementation of conventional and non-conventional instruments, including:

- The International legislation that is part of the internal order: the Declaration on the elimination of violence against women; the Convention for the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women – CEDAW; the Inter-American Convention to prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women (Belém Do Pará).
- Special measures of a temporary nature: Mechanisms that have a greater incidence in the fight against discrimination. These promote equality and constitute social and political instruments for democratization.

These instruments have enabled the development of changes in the legal domain, with a call on the States to seek the elimination of violence against women and the inclusion in their legislation of express measures on the prevention, punishment and eradication of violence. Further, the incorporation of concepts such as citizenship and democracy has been made possible thanks to these instruments, thus contributing to the

democratization of power and to the recognition of women as social and political subjects. Undoubtedly, in constructing a participatory democracy parliaments must better represent the interests of each gender and include the needs of women, by virtue of the fact that equality and non discrimination can only

be attained if the demands and interests of social diversity are to be included.

Regulatory changes in favour of women in the Americas and the Caribbean are reflected at the following levels:

## NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONS

Pais	Últimas reformas, artículos pertinentes	Temáticas
Cuba	Amended in 1992; Chapter VI	Equality.
Argentina	1994 Reform; Section 37 Section 75, subsection 23	Recognition of women's human rights and standing of the CEDAW Convention. Positive actions relating to political rights. Equal opportunities.
Uruguay	1997 Constitution. Sections 7, 8, 42, 54 and 74	
Mexico	Constitutional Reform relating to Indigenous Affairs, dated 14 August 2001. Section 2	Indigenous women's rights and inclusion.
Ecuador	New text of 2008. Section 1 Section 11, no. 2. Section 27 Section 35 and Section 43 and other sections.	Secular State. Non discrimination and equality. Education. Rights of pregnant women. Miscellaneous rights.
Nicaragua	Section 48	Equality and effective participation.



## SECONDARY LEGISLATION

Country	Law	Date of Publication
Costa Rica	Law 7142, Promotion of Social Equality of Women.	1990
Venezuela	Law on Equal Opportunity for Women.	1993
Chile	Law 19611, Equality between Men and Women.	1999
Panama	Law on Equal Opportunity for Women.	1999
Honduras	Law on Equality for Women <sup>1</sup>	2000
Mexico	Federal Law on the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination.	2003
Mexico	General Law on the Equality between Men and Women (2006)	2006
Peru	Law on Equal Opportunities between Men and Women (Law No. 28983)	2007
Uruguay	Law 18104 through which the National Institute for Women sets out the National Plan for Equal Rights and Opportunities.	2007
Guatemala	Ley de Dignificación y Promoción Integral de la Mujer. (Decreto 7-99)	1999

<sup>1</sup> Currently a new text is being drafted.

## LAWS ON QUOTAS

Country	Year of Adoption	% Quota
Argentina	1991	30
Bolivia	1997	30
Brazil	1997	30
Costa Rica	1996	40
Colombia	2000	30% of Executive Power
Ecuador	2000	50
Honduras	2000	30
Mexico	1996	
Panama	1997	30
Paraguay	1996	20
Peru	1997	30
Dominican Republic	1997	33





## Legislating on Violence against Women

There are four areas in which the majority of legislations have undergone legislative changes in order to contribute to the eradication of gender violence (family and sexual violence):

- Domestic violence (intra-family violence). Its majority

enactment in the region dates back to the period between 1994-1998, and it is based on two models:

- 1) Laws of Mixed Nature<sup>2</sup> and
  - 2) Partial reforms to Penal Codes.
- Sexual harassment (fields of education and work)
  - Gender violence
  - Sexual violence (criminal field)

### LEGISLANDO CONTRA LA VIOLENCIA A LAS MUJERES

Country	Law	Year
Peru		1993
Argentina		1994
Chile		1994
Bolivia		1995
Ecuador		1995
Panama		1995
Uruguay		1995
Colombia		1996
Costa Rica	Law against Domestic violence / intra-family violence	1996
El Salvador		1996
Guatemala		1996
Mexico		1996
Nicaragua		1996
Honduras		1997
Dominican Republic		1997
Venezuela		1998
Paraguay		2000

<sup>2</sup> Legislative role, but it also includes monitoring.

Country	Law	Year
Brazil	María da Penha Law	2006
Colombia	Regulations on awareness, prevention and punishment of forms of violence and discrimination against women.	2008
Guatemala	Law against femicide and other forms of violence against women (Executive Order No. 22-2008)	2008
Argentina	Law on Comprehensive Protection to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women in the area of Interpersonal Affairs.	2009
El Salvador	Draft Bill on Violence	2010
Costa Rica	Law on Criminilization of Violence against Women (Law 8589)	1996
Puerto Rico		1979
Mexico		1989
Peru		1991
Guatemala		1997
Colombia		1997
Dominican Republic	Modificación de los tipos penales sobre violencia sexual	1997
Honduras		1997
Bolivia		1997
Ecuador		1998
El Salvador		1998
Chile		1999



# Legislating in favour of sexual rights and reproductive rights of women

*“The human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.”*

(Beijing Platform for Action – 1995)

n relation to the sexual and reproductive rights, States have still a long way to go. Mainly, they must commit to ensure that these rights:

- Are accepted and acknowledged as human rights.
- Are accepted and acknowledged by States, and, therefore, that States take on responsibility and guarantee them to the population, with due consideration to their specific needs.
- Are taken into account in broader-scope legislation, and that greater visibility is ascribed to the diversity of subjects.


## REGULATIONS ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Country	Regulations on sexual and reproductive rights
Argentina	Constitution.
Brazil	Policy on sexual and reproductive rights.
Colombia	Law on Equality relating to Health and Accessibility.
Costa Rica	Decree on the Protection of Sexual and Reproductive Rights.
Honduras	Law on Equality.
Ecuador	Political Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador.
Nicaragua	General Health Code.
Paraguay	Municipal Ordinance of Asunción.
Dominican Republic	National Regulation on Reproductive Health.
Uruguay	National Plan on Equality, Chapter on Sexual and Reproductive Rights.
Venezuela	Constitution.

Sexual education has been included in the curricula in eleven countries in the region: The Bahamas, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Puerto Rico.

## Final Remarks

1. Currently we cannot discuss democracy if democracy excludes the principle of substantive equality and real equality; it is imperative that the review of women's human rights be considered as benchmarks to measure government actions and their compliance with international obligations.
2. Women's human rights must be included within the ethical-legal framework constructed with a gender perspective, in order to form the new constitutional regulations.
3. The production of legislation must respond to the paradigm of the principle of substantive/real equality, one that takes into consideration the interests of women within their specific realities.
4. The production of legislation must directly contribute to the construction of a culture that is based on the respect for and the promotion of human rights, to which end it must be focused on the eradication of violence and discrimination against women on account of their gender.

5. Discrimination and violence against women on account of their gender constitute a flagrant violation against human rights and, thus, are priority issues for the drafting of legislation which does not pertain to women alone but they are a matter in the construction of democracy.
6. The drafting of legislation must be ruled by the parameters of a secular State.
7. The repercussions of a dichotomy position in the drafting of legislation, when this may be due to neoliberal policies, directly impacts on the ability to guarantee the principle of equality and non discrimination, and the right of women to live a life free from violence.
8. It is necessary to enshrine the right to substantive equality, as established in the CEDAW Convention; the right to live a life free from violence, in accordance with the Belém Do Pará Convention.
9. Special measures, of a temporary nature, must be considered as a means to achieving substantive equality, which enables a dignified life for women, in their diversities.
10. Better legislation is thus imperative to guarantee sexual and reproductive rights. 



## Exercising power: the experience of a woman politician

**Enoé Uranga,**  
FEDERAL DEPUTY  
MEXICAN CONGRESS



- Sociologist, with a specialization in *Public Policies and Human Rights*, a diploma in *Social Politics and Gender* and a diploma in *Parliamentary Practice in Mexico*.
- Activist fighting for women's rights since the 1980s, and an activist at the LGBTTTI Movement for 20 years, where she has had several representation positions. Winner of the *Gay Award of Merit*.
- Federal Deputy in the Legislature of the Chamber of Deputies (2009 – 2012)
- Secretary of the Human Rights and Special Family Committee and a member of Justice Committee of the

Committee of the Center for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality Studies.

- Co-founder and (prior to being elected federal deputy) leader of the Diversity, Social Equality, and Democracy organization (DESyDe, as per its Spanish acronym).
- Former UN Temporary Advisor for the UN Program on AIDS (UNAIDS); elected Principal in the Latina Lesbian Leadership, of The Latinan/o Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Organization, held in Washington, D.C. in May 2002. Member of the International Network of Lesbian and Gays Officials

(INLGO), an international organization comprised of elected and appointed gay officials.

- Has produced a large number of presentations and articles on social politics, human rights, secularity, citizenship, sexual diversity, women, and gender.
- Has run seminars, conferences, courses, diploma courses, and workshops on discrimination, gender, sexual diversity, human rights, and other issues, in nearly every major Mexican city, and also worldwide in different countries of the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Africa.

The exercise of sharing and comparing our own distinct experiences enables us to confirm that, except in the case of specific characteristics of our own personal histories, the problems that we women have been facing are not isolated events, but rather a *systemic phenomenon* and, likewise, they enable us to better face opposition and vacuums which in various latitudes account for the obstruction to the exercise of our political rights and, with that, the rights of others.

I have been invited to discuss my personal experience in the exercise of power, which compels me to also talk about my experience from the perspective of the marginal position from which I have been involved in political activism. However, do not be misled to assume that I will not acknowledge that I have indeed sought and fought for occupying power spaces. In fact, I must actually confess that I am not afraid of exercising power. It is a matter of having it clear what power is for, what we want it for, what we are going to do with it, what is the reading we women make of political power, and how we define political work – not only in relation to the exercise commonly done by men, but amongst us women ourselves.

### The Trick that Tried to Legitimise Exclusion

Mexico has been going through a growing ideological identity crisis within its political parties for a long time now. The left, from where I carry out my activism, is suffering the worst of disarticulations and it is sadly fading fast at various fronts. That, together with my belief that social movements must ensure they do not become the loot of or hostages to partisan

electoral interest, has resulted, despite being a believer in the party system, in my lack of affiliation with any particular party. On the two occasions when I was a Member of Congress, it was the result of an alliance amongst social movements and some leftist political party. On both occasions, not only did we reach an electoral agreement but, rather, a legislative agreement in relation to my candidature.

This unique characteristic of being an external legislator has enabled the political and legislative agenda agreed upon to become my parliamentary priority. In other words, in my particular case, the agenda has always featured over and above the parties or the interests of the incumbent leader.

In the case of the current legislature, this meant, by way of example, that from the very first sitting of the Chamber of Deputies we came up with a strong debate which finally became a national media debate, since initially they tried to replace women legislators who had been elected following the gender quota system by men legislators. That is, in the majority of parties they turned to the leave trick to pass on the seat to the male alternate. In joint consensus with all the parties, it was agreed upon that this 'formality' would be done with discretion "so as not to damage the image of the House".

The parliamentary group, with which I am aligned, was informed of the decision not to discuss this issue, to which I opposed, within my own group. I immediately sought other allied women from other parties who, although they shared this indignation, were at first hesitant since they claimed that they were not in a

position to intervene because 'the agreement was for the issue to be dealt with discreetly'.

I naturally made it very clear that the agreement did not include me and that the issue would certainly be dealt with at the House in full. This statement made it possible to enlist further support from other women representatives and then led to the debates and various actions which permitted to postpone, for months, such replacements. These events, though not enough to put an end to the fraud to legislation or the deceit of women citizens, indeed promoted their dissemination and disapproval by the media. We managed to propose a reform to the law in order to prevent this from reoccurring, and we prevented the PRD Parliamentary Group (of which I am a member) from carrying out such replacements.

We needed to reach the highest electoral tribunal to document the usurpation that was being made of our seats through this channel, and that it was not a matter of violence directed against one single woman who was forced to resign from office, but rather at all women, since their individual office-bearing is representative, that is, we discharge our duties in Parliaments not on our own behalf but on behalf of our collective rights and on account of a policy of citizen empowerment.

The disdain with which men politicians regarded the issue and even the male sympathy with those alternate representatives, whom we did not allow to take office, are a definite display of the relevance of the quota system to women citizens. The very same historical track-record of every country, the institutional



architecture, the size and even the very rules within parliaments, favour or hinder—as much as electoral procedures do—our own legislative presence. This is the inventiveness with which the parties always find a way to bypass the law to mock our own political rights, which include special measures of a temporary nature, commonly known as gender quotas, which we have fought so hard to get going.

### “A woman’s body is no guarantee”

As far as my country is concerned, there is a true sense of disillusionment with the results of democracy in net terms of a greater equality for all people, especially for women, which hinders the advancement of our political participation, particularly when we are faced with a climate of violence and insecurity. For example, the expectation to comply with the Millennium Goals under these conditions (as far as it relates to greater political representation of women) is seriously diminished.

The current federal legislature in Mexico includes 74.2% of men and 25.8% of women, that is, below the 30% as stipulated under the law. Only in the smallest of parliamentary groups (Convergencia) there is parity, as it is formed by eight legislators. This is shamefully followed by a third of female legislators, the second force in Congress, with the rightist Partido Acción Nacional.

The group of the *Democratic Revolution Party* (PRD, as per its Spanish acronym), the third force in the legislature and the main political expression of the so called left, has 29% of

women, which is further out of line with the basic documents of that party, and in violation of the law. The smallest percentage of women legislators (19%) is paradoxically the largest group, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI, as per its Spanish acronym).

It is evident that amongst the parties it becomes necessary to go deeper into political training activities with a focus on women, as well as into the strengthening of affirmative actions in the establishment of functional deadlocks, to prevent the frequent tricks of making women reach positions through popular election with the clear intention of having them immediately replaced with men.

Without a doubt, similar attempts are repeated in other parliaments and we must draw a comparison to present our opposition and demand the effective implementation of the gender quota. In turn, we must also weigh not only quota procedures but also the selection of candidates to become women legislators and, in general, to occupy all other popular or administrative electoral posts, for we women are different and we experience other identity interests.

For decades feminists have been pointing out that “the body of a woman is no guarantee” and I maintain that this is not even the case with the left because, often as a result of the pervasive boldness of wishing to expand or perpetuate political power, male partisan leaders have learnt to use their wives, their daughters, their lovers to position them in spaces reserved for their gender, making of them testimonial officers who are

ruled by the decisions of their ‘beau’ or their father, whichever the case may be. This does not mean, of course, that there are not any wives, daughters or lovers of men politicians who are good or even better women politicians than these men are, but their road to power is nevertheless not made any easier.

Let me give you another example: I have come right now from another event on family law in Jalisco, a state ruled by one of the most conservative and machista of all men in our country. The event had been organised by the Chamber of Deputies and was open to the participation of subject specialists and to civil society alike. We wanted to hear plural opinions regarding legal needs at a federal level on the issue of families but, regrettably, the event turned into a crusade over the defence of the only type of family as understood by the catholic hierarchy.

We witnessed the downpour of women politicians, under the banner of something like “galloping activists of perpetual watch” who en masse presented papers all with the same discourse: “abstinence for the youth; the place of women is the home; have as many children as God sends you, but do so only in the sacred matrimony between man and woman”. But above all else, they opposed the right of women to decide over their bodies in the matter of abortion and promoted exclusion and discrimination towards lesbians, homosexuals and transgender individuals.

These women politicians exercise power to subdue women. They are the women operators of a fundamentalism which segregates and violates our rights. They went to that meeting with the mission of not wanting to be heard like all others, but

to sabotage the event, with the intention to insult other women present there in order to claim for their rights and those of their families. These other families exist and they are legal and in no way whatsoever do they affect those promoted by the Church; all they are demanding is that the constitutional mandate of equality under the law be complied with.

The power these ladies exercise “is against the law whereby women are to decide over their bodies and lives”, and it is subordinated to the service of a system which oppresses women.

It is all too frequent at the Chamber that, whenever attempts are made to discuss a proposal seeking to strengthen the right of women to pleasure, to their financial independence and to their body, right-wing parties instruct women within their groups to speak against these rights. The role women have in politics is therefore a very clear one, but ... what good is that kind of power to us women in general?

It is important to point out that not all rightist women politicians lend themselves to playing this role, for some of them are highly skilled and properly trained and, although we may differ in certain fundamental aspects, I must admit they have won their seats without having to become instruments of such fundamentalism.

A recent incident during the mid-elections just held in Mexico, sheds light on this review. As an argument in the pursuit of support to his candidature to Governor for his party, one of the local leaders in the State of Hidalgo put forward that: “the country and, in this case, the State of Hidalgo, is not yet prepared to

be ruled by a woman". He asked his like-minded supporters whether they would like to be ruled in the home by their wives. To this, the immediate response was "no!" To date, the incident remains uncriminalized by the electoral authority.

It is evident that it is not worth asking ourselves about the indicators, variables or political scenarios that this type of male characters apply to determine the exact time and moment when they believe each country is ready for women to access the decision-making spaces that affect their lives.

It would seem that in our own particular Latin American cultural politics, phallocracy continues to assume that the exercise of power depends on the incumbent government leaders possessing or not certain physical attributes that are inherent in a particular gender. It does not matter that in the region and elsewhere in the world we have already witnessed presidential terms and governments of women leaders worthy of recognition for their achievements, or that, as is the case in my country, men in power (but for some exceptions) are doing so badly. One needs only see the social, economic and security disaster as a palpable evidence of paternalistic and patriarchal authoritarianism which has so significantly hindered the consolidation of democratic institutionalism.

### Women and Politics, the "Political" and Public Policies

In order to facilitate the analysis, one must make a triple distinction between politics, what is political and public policies. The former is a set of practices, whether written or otherwise,

through which the daily pragmatic interplay takes place between certain interest groups, generally under the form of parties, and which enables to continue the war without resorting to violence. Said factions align, or they claim to be aligned, with programmatic axes which provide them with ideological self-adscription and which contribute to legitimising positions within the social discourse. They are commonly split into left and right, although there is also a trend towards the emergence of an alleged centre that is all too frequently vague.

As a general rule, when women participate in politics they must choose between these poles. Those who choose the left do not always see themselves as feminists, although they assume that it is within that field of action where the most progressive and collective positions are found. In turn, those who opt for the right rather tend to place emphasis on the defence of individualities, but under conservative positions.

What is indeed certain is that part of the outcome of the end of the "cold war" is that said political profiles have become diluted, and now both liberals and conservative alike can be grouped within the left or the right. However, feminism is a little apprehensive as a political movement, both in the left and the right, but could undoubtedly never be seen from conservative perspectives because their liberation approaches give them a progressive character.

The emerging issue is that of distinguishing between 'progressive' or 'conservative', but... In relation to what? Hence the need for our second definition, that is: the political; understood

as that something which is beyond the daily and situational practice of those agents located in the public milieu, that sphere likely to narrow what must be the topic under analysis, dispute or debate. Under such a context, one must wonder: How much has our agenda permeated through or positioned itself in the political arena?

The items in this agenda (sexual and reproductive rights, non violence, free choice of erotic affection, the demand for employment, equal remuneration, security and the right not to be harassed, health, etc.)... Are they all considered a priority for the development of a country or region, in the same manner one regards the economic, national defence or telecommunications policy, for example?

Thus, I believe that one needs to link the issue of sexual and reproductive rights more as a matter which has to do with the type of development we aspire to. By way of example, Mexico will not reach the Millennium Goals on maternal mortality because the ever-present standard in the poorest areas of the country is that of the Church and its edict of 'have as many children as God sends you'... even if they are to die of starvation or if you die in labour.

The idea of what is public commonly surrounds what is political, and this facilitates correspondence with the male world. However, we women all know that what is private is in turn part of what is public, for it is there where power relations are negotiated, and because the functionality of private life increasingly requires far more State intervention. The public and private

spheres have long stopped being alien to and independent from each other; both fall under the jurisdiction of what is considered political, but political agreements have not been sufficiently developed so that both are jointly and comprehensively considered.

I insist that it is necessary to avail ourselves of solid mechanisms to ensure we take to Parliaments the diverse demands of women, a basic pre-requisite to break away with inertia and discriminatory practices. The prejudice, institutionalised in the patriarchal system, prevents us from realizing that the importance of the gender agenda cross cuts the rest of what is political.

How often do women deputies point to a problem or present a proposal that is overlooked until it is taken on by a male representative? Which female representative has not heard the parliamentary coordinator use the following commonplace expressions when it comes to segregating the rights of women or human rights causes, including sexual differences?: "Right now there are more pressing matters", or "no, wait, can't you see that if we deal with this matter now, it will impact the greater agreement for the good of the country?" "You can count on my support once this critical situation is over, but it is not a strategic issue now."

The purpose of what is political is very adequately summarised in the approach of the Beijing Platform for Action, which states that the incorporation of women in instances where decisions are taken has the purpose of changing the order of social

priorities, not only because they become incorporated into new issues, issues which directly impact on the daily lives of people, but because they offer other points of view which help broaden the perspective and scope of all policies.

Lastly, the third reference is in relation to public policies that sectorally relate to the various stakeholders. Although progress is being made in the institutionalisation of gender for a greater equality between men and women, all too frequently this is not transferred from the simple implementation to other strategic forms. What is most concerning in this regard is that women continue to be used as devices to attain other social or economic goals set out in Government plans, instead of placing them as the ultimate end of such actions.

Without a doubt, for the exercise of power, of another form of power, the main challenge for the 21st century (as the slogan of this meeting states) is the recognition of the domestic space and its positioning at the very core of what is political. Needless to say here that a good woman politician must be ‘super-woman’ and work three shifts or otherwise cancel out her affective life in exchange for her political development. Very few are the instances whereby heterosexual relationships engage in a thorough review of their domestic responsibilities with a distribution of workload that is done according to their obligations in the public life.

It may thus be necessary to work further in the regulatory frameworks and in public policies leading to the transformation of the dynamics of roles within the sphere of heterosexual

families, in order to trigger the changes necessary to attain greater equity in the distribution of chores as well as in the opportunities available to men and women.

Within the parliaments, the Committees on Gender Equality continue to have a greater presence of women members and the gender budget remains an annex to the general budget. Implicit is the supposition that the State can function indistinctly from how the different types of families operate, or that corporations can attain the same level of productivity regardless of labour conditions and the social protection of their female workers.

In the field of public policies, the role of the economic policy should be underscored. In my country, for example, the national women’s agency responsible for managing gender policies, is attached to the Department of Finance and Public Lending, and one would assume this is a reflection of the importance government attaches to the issue; however, it rather perpetuates the perception that it is an appropriate manner to indeed reorient but also to mask the fact that something is being done.

That is an important yearly battle at the Chamber of Deputies, and one worth mentioning, for it makes a clear distinction regarding the manner in which women legislate. As far as the issue of budget is concerned, it is not uncommon for us women legislators from various parliamentary groups to come together to develop alternative proposals to those of the government and to unite in their defence. That is the manner in which we have been able to make gradual progress in the field of resources.

As we may be able to appreciate, the proposal is to work not only in politics, that is, in the transformation of practices and arrangements to channel conflicts and to articulate interests, but also in what is political, this being understood as the inclusion of a cross-cutting agenda deemed as a priority by all political actors, and in public policies, through a change of approach in programs, both in terms of their aims as well as of their expenditure and outcomes.

I believe the process of empowerment we women of the world have allowed ourselves, not only in politics but in all instances of human life, have led to deeply questioning power itself, its goals and its interlocutors. We have fortunately engaged in a one-way journey, regardless of the effort of conservatives to maintain a symbolic and economically established order which no longer operates under the guise of the advancement of human rights.

I am fully aware of the serious difficulties this transformation implies and I know that in order to materialise progress in to represent the various groups or currents within the parties. However, this is offset with other very significant advantages, such as facilitating the cross-cutting exchange with the representatives from the various groups which are closer to the stances taken in the citizens’ agendas. The freedom gained compels us to redouble the effort to persuade legislators in the absence of a faction discipline applied at the time of voting. Our strength lies in the fact that ours are not partisan but citizen-related proposals; our arguments are always in line with the soundness of the demands and in bringing about

these agendas we are supported by the lobbying undertaken by social organisations.

### Implementing the Unthinkable

In addition, and although these statements may not sound utterly modest here, we already have the prestige of the achievements attained, which had so far seemed impossible. When we decided to seek a representational office for the first time, we did so as part of a strategy to help the transition of the LGBTTTI movement (of which I am a member) from an anti-establishment activism to one capable of positioning itself forward in a positive manner in the pursuit of the recognition of our rights and the strengthening of our citizens.

Amongst other actions, we developed a legislative proposal under the name of ‘Coexistence Society Law’ which sought to open the national debate in relation to the recognition of same sex partners as well as the need for households alternative to heterosexual marriage to have an institution which afforded them protection. The idea was to centre the concept on the issue of recognition of rights and on the understanding that no-one, regardless of his/her level of power, could act on behalf of another human being in choosing “whom they must love or with whom they must share their lives”.

This was at a time in Mexico when political parties eluded taking a stance on the rights of persons with sexual preferences other than heterosexuality, and a significant goal was to force such decision. We naturally sought to win the battle over the





legislative proposal but we were nevertheless conscious of the fact that this work would take years to bear. For us all, men and women at that particular point in time, it was of fundamental importance to win the social debate.

When we presented the proposal, some of those who ought to have been our natural allies, feminists, intellectuals, augured us the worst of failures and did not act in our favour. For traditional politicians, the issue appeared simply unapproachable and for several analysts it was “something that would not be viable in a country as catholic as Mexico”.

It was a pathway of construction different from the traditional one. Its legislation was driven by civil society organisations close to the LGBTTTI, but we also sought the support of various progressive voices in society which, thanks to a persistent articulation of their arguments and real life accounts in the media, managed to permeate into public discussions and spaces to generate a shift in the social perception and in political plurality.

We did significant work at the universities and from that space the issue emerged and we opened the debate over the different types of family relationships happening in real life through our Coexistence Society initiative. This innovative work enabled us to identify same sex partners and, above all else, the horrid homophobia and lesbo-phobia which so openly or silently denied the universality of human rights.

The strategy we set out enabled us to place emphasis on the fact that this was a secular but also a legal debate, and for

this reason we did not react to the provocations from the de facto powers of ecclesiastical and conservative groups and we managed to take the debate to the sphere of human rights, but limited to the debate of the citizens.

This type of work presented the population with a number of situations. Firstly, that there exists a diverse reality in terms of the families that make up society and, although this may have seemed obvious, it had neither been spoken of, nor had it been legally recognised in the past. Secondly, that we have a full constitutional right not to be discriminated against. Thirdly, that society was a lot more cognisant of its diversity than what the traditional political parties had suspected and, very importantly, we secured the parties’ definition and thus we demonstrated that beyond what their basic documents stated, the PRD, the Government of the Federal District and mainly the Chief of Government Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), all three of them leftist by self-definition, had no intention to legislate in favour of the LGBTTTI population. It was therefore relevant to secure the support of several other parties before gaining the support of what we had assumed to be our natural ally.

Furthermore, during my term of office at the legislature (2000-2003) we managed to make significant progress in respect of anti-discrimination and human rights laws. But we had to wait 7 years; we even had to wait for AMLO (who had been particularly opposed to our proposal) to shift his efforts to his presidential campaign to ensure that the law was adopted, which already had the very broad support from the citizens in the capital by then.

What is central to this experience is that it was the civil society who went farther than their own political parties’ agendas, promoted a greater social immersion in the legislative debate and, above all, compelled to rethink the secularism which characterizes Mexico. Society did change. And we besieged the legislature in the capital city to such a degree that we secured a level of opening which compelled the parties to move away from their conservative stance. The passage of the Coexistence Societies proposal enabled us to make progress with other important pieces of legislation, such as the Law on the Identity of Transgender People.

As we are here attending this event, the Mexican Supreme Court of Justice is meeting to definitively decide whether non discriminatory marriages will become a reality in the country. In the case of same sex marriages, they are deciding today whether the right to adopt, currently enjoyed as single individuals, is a right we will be able to enjoy once married. I am certain that they will decide in our favour.

As deputies, and also in working for different organizations, we have maintained a close communication with the Ministers, we bring to them diverse information and testimonials to help them familiarise themselves with the urgency of girls and boys who are the children of same sex couples gaining access to the rights currently denied to them due to the lack of legal recognition. On account of the so-called ‘greater good of the child’ and out of respect for our Constitution, these ministers will protect the rights of the children of lesbian and gay families to guarantee that they are also protected under the law.

Some ten years ago we would have not dared to say, amidst the festivities of the bicentennial, that we would be living this display of progress in the field of human rights.

I do not forget, not even for a second, the great power vested in fundamentalist movements, and the interests at play in the struggle for our rights. Much of the power held by the catholic hierarchy depends on the control over women’s lives. We still lack the political will of governments and of political parties to assume the need for reforms that favour laws on violence against women, against human trafficking, against discrimination and for the legislative standardization, pursuant to international covenants on human rights.

Thus, we proposed a constitutional reform to make it explicit that the Mexican State, as well as being a representative, democratic and federal Republic, is secular. This republican characteristic is central to the demand of our civil rights and must be supported by further work towards a democratic framework where our political rights can prosper.

This constitutional reform has already been passed at the Chamber of Deputies and is awaiting confirmation by the Senate. In the same situation is a reform that gives international treaties and human rights constitutional status, and which provides for better protection to diversity in our country. All these initiatives have enjoyed significant active support from human rights, feminist and sexual diversity organisations. The bill we presented on social security for alternative households to traditional marriage is awaiting confirmation and I know that it

will be passed into law this present year, for the democratic progress in our continent depends on laying the foundations for inclusive social development.

### Corollary

I am the daughter of parents from the 60's generation, social activists, guerrilla fighters who were tortured and made political prisoners, one of them going into exile. I am very aware of the history behind me. The LGBTTTI movement in Mexico has turned 32 years of age, the feminist movement, 40. All my life I have worked in politics and I will do so for the rest of it, and I know that for anyone else engaged in the type of politics that I do, it must be very clear that power can be fleeting. I am a respected politician, but I make others uneasy. As far as this legislature is concerned, I am on a countdown. Every day that passes is one day less in my term of office, yet I still have so much left to be done!

We are in this new century faced with a change in the ways we conceive power. Nowadays, citizens require that we give that power legitimately taken through democratic channels a 'purpose', and that very purpose is to generate benefits for the daily and concrete lives of people without any discrimination, with respect for differences, and with inclusiveness.

Equality can be either reflected in concrete public policies, in the laws, in Congress, in the media, in money, in power, or it can be lived 'day by day', in the streets and in the home, or else it is NOT equality. By strengthening women's citizenship we attach another quality to democracy, we afford it meaning, and I am not just speaking of representative democracy but of participatory democracy as well, because politics and the political have a symbolic configuration, and because there must be coherence between what is private and what is public. ♀

The emergence of social claims arising from the diversity of identities calls for democracy to be based on new paradigms. To speak of democracy, in the true sense of the word, not only must the right to vote be guaranteed, but also multi-partisanship and permanent elections, as well as a full representation of the people, and the voice of women in particular. Hence parity must be seen as a right which ensures collective representativeness.

But the participation of women in politics remains to be limited. Even when their representation in parliament has increased over the last decade, gender parity in political decision-making and in all other levels is still far from becoming a reality. The relationship that we women have with power continues to be a difficult one. Even though we have attained the recognition of the majority of our human rights as citizens, access to positions of power is, still today, an unresolved matter.

Regarding *proportional representation* of gender, the political class must take on this responsibility. A responsible and representative leading class is one which plays the role of intermediary and the conduit of societal demands and one which is accountable for its actions. Democratic representation implies that a political class must reflect the political, sociological and cultural characteristics of the society it represents. The representation of women, in their full diversity, as well as their participation in the decision-making process, from definition to implementation, continues to be a challenge for the political system in Guatemala, without which we cannot speak of a real and effective democracy.



**Otilia Lux de Cotti,**  
DEPUTY, GUATEMALA

### Political Experience from the Perspective of Ethnic Diversity

- Guatemalan leader who has struggled relentlessly for the defence of indigenous peoples' rights in the social and political arena.
- Member of the Commission for Historical Clarification, in charge of investigating human rights violations during the 30-year civil war in Central America.
- 2002: Minister for Culture and Sports during Alfonso Portillo's administration.
- 2004 – 2007: Member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues; she also served on UNESCO's Executive Board.
- Winner of the fifteenth edition of the Bartolomé de las Casas 2005 Award in recognition of her *"permanent leadership and commitment to the defence of indigenous peoples' human rights"*, established by the Spanish State Secretariat for International Cooperation.
- September 2007: Elected national deputy for the Encuentro por Guatemala Party; in this position, she endorsed the passing of the Law against Femicide in April 2008.
- 2008: Decorated with the Officer rank of the National
- Order of the Legion of Honour of the French republic.
- *Licenciada* (B. A.) in Education Administration; educator, and teacher.
- Advocate for the Maya cultural heritage.
- Indigenous women's human rights activist.
- Speaker at several events and seminars related to women's and indigenous peoples' issues, women's participation, human rights, and gender.
- Author of several publications on these issues.

Guatemalan women have been traditionally excluded from all decision-making processes, and have limited access to electoral posts and public office in the daily work, as well as in the economic, political and cultural arenas in the country. The former have been and continue to be exercised almost exclusively by men, and this has hindered progress and women's empowerment. Limited access by women to the various spheres of power restricts the possibility of transforming and democratising power, thus significantly reducing their ability to influence decisions related to public tasks.

Women's political participation is one of the best opportunities to exercise democracy. The involvement of indigenous women in politics is a true act of heroism: if for any woman to reach parliament is a difficult feat, for an indigenous woman it is an odyssey, for we must overcome a greater number of cultural, economic and social setbacks.

Limitations to indigenous women's involvement in decision-making positions


- **Partisan system:** Political parties still have a masculine view; exclusion of women prevents their democratisation and generates a lack of interest among women to participate.
- **Limited financial resources:** Always related to the anti-democratic nature of the funding of political activities.

- **Double and triple work-shifts:** This prevents the assumption of greater responsibilities demanding more time.
- **Feminisation of poverty:** Does not allow access by women to their independence, autonomy and participation in the collective decision-making process.
- Violations to civil and political rights which occur with great frequency due to the absence of civil registration or documentation, which also infringes their right to identity.

Challenges for the achievement of ethnic and gender equality in the political context

- Striking a balance between gender equality and a democratic perspective, on the basis of social equality. Actively participating and not occupying seats or public office without leaving an imprint.
- Formulating and adopting public policies which strengthen the position of indigenous women, transform society and recognise pluri-culturalism and multi-ethnicity.
- Increasing the participation of a greater number of women, not only as candidates but also as voters.
- Promoting quotas for the purpose of fostering the inclusion of women in the public decision-making process, in view of the fact that:

- We women make up half of the population, so sub-representation harms the legitimacy of democratic institutions.
- We women have particular interests, linked to our gender, which can only be politically represented by ourselves. In relation to indigenous matters, it is only indigenous women who can express and represent our specific rights.
- The argument of difference, on its own, emphasises that we women have distinctive life experiences and qualities which must be integrated into the political life.

- The perspectives of role models indicate that women who manage to play a role in institutional politics could contribute to the erosion of sexist prejudices and to encouraging other women to follow in their steps.
- Reforming the Electoral and Political Parties Law in order to break away with the hegemony of some sectors of power.
- Training cadres of Mayan women politicians, capable of presenting a political alternative on the basis of equity principles and values, complementarity and harmony, in which men and women are co-creators of an intercultural democracy. 

## Political Participation of Inuit Women of NUNAVUT, Canada

**Aluki Rojas,**  
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NUNAVUT  
PEOPLE, CANADA



- Currently the Deputy Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs for the Government of Nunavut, Canada.
- 2004-2007: Director of Policies and Planning for an Inuit organization, for the Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth. Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Human Resources and the Environment of Nunavut.
- Active militant advocating for Inuit organizations: Trainer at the Nunavut Institute, Ottawa.
- Project leader on the subject of the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and the Women's Health Center in Pauktuutit, of the Inuit Women's Association.
- Cooperation with the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) in Quito, through the International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development of Montreal.
- *Licenciatura* and Master's degree from Trent University, Ontario.
- Speaks three languages.

## The Ancestral Nunavut People

The most important land claim process in the history of Canada took place with the creation of Nunavut, meaning "our land", in 1999, conceived as the homeland of the Inuit of Canada and acknowledged as the country's newest territory. In Canada, the Inuit are represented by "Tapiriit Kanatami", a national organization currently led by a woman, Mary Simon. Nunavut is located in the northeast of the country and covers one fifth of the Canadian territory. Most of the population is made up of Inuit people, who speak the Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun dialect. There are 26 small communities mainly situated in coastal areas.

Women and minors account for nearly 70% of the Nunavut population; 39% is under 15, thus representing Canada's youngest age group.

The Inuit people have nomadic roots. Production changes led to the rise of sedentary communities and to a new lifestyle and social structures, where everyone has an established role. The domestic space has traditionally been the women's natural environment, while the public space has been the men's domain. Women make decisions at home on how to bring up their children, how to cook and dress. Men, on the other hand, are in charge of tasks outside the home, like hunting. The sexual division of labour helped meet mutual survival needs; women made warm clothes to prevent men from dying when exposed to extreme temperatures, while men provided food for their families' livelihood.

The changes in Nunavut people's lifestyle brought about a redefinition of some social and cultural patterns, especially for men, whereas the roles assigned to women remained unchanged: They had to continue looking after their homes, while the men, thanks to market developments, no longer had to go hunting or fishing to provide for their family's livelihood but were integrated into the labour market.

Despite this contradiction, women have also benefited from these cultural changes and, according to statistical data, have accessed education and employment - 80% of students are women. Schooling of both men and women is however lower than in the rest of the country.

## The Current Situation

Although the Nunavut people currently have the lowest female representation in Canada's provincial legislatures, there are two women in the Legislative Assembly. One of them has reached the highest position within our territory and, in addition to being the highest parliamentary authority, she is the only woman holding that position in Canada. Our second representative is the current Minister of Health, Leona Aglukkaq, an Inuk woman and a Parliament member from Nunavut. She succeeded Nancy Karetak-Lindell, also a woman parliamentarian from Nunavut.

Consensus is very important to the Inuit tradition and is reflected in the Nunavut legislature. Prior to the creation of Nunavut, the ad hoc committee suggested that the first Legislative Assembly should have one man and one woman per constituency.

Unfortunately, this proposal was rejected by the Nunavut population in a referendum held in 1997 (57% to 43%). Most of the population wanted to elect candidates based on their merits and not on government affirmative action policies.

There are many Inuit women who are strong and powerful and have become a major reference both at a local and national level:

- Sheila Watt-Cloutier, devoted to denouncing global warming and climate change. She has been a delegate for the Inuit Circumpolar Council for several periods and has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.
- Mary Simon, the current President of Canada's Inuit Organization "Tapiriit Kanatami", formerly chaired by Rosemarie Kuptana and Okalik Egeesiak, both Inuit women.
- Okalik Egeesiak, the President of the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, which represents the Qikiqtaaluk region, one of the three regions of Nunavut.
- Edna Elias, the current Minister of Nunavut, following Ann Hanson.
- Alexina Kublu, the current Minister of Languages.
- Elisapee Sheutiapiik, the incumbent mayor of Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut. Also serves as the President of Pauktuutit, a national Inuit women's organization.

## The Future

Based on the above, I may say that a bright future lies ahead for the Inuit women pursuing a political career.



The Nunavut government acknowledges the significance of achieving full and equal participation of women in the political arena, so that the voice of women may be heard in public policies, laws, and planning. It also understands the need of implementing special plans and programs for women's leadership development and for promoting their participation.

During 2008 and 2009, the government of Nunavut, in cooperation with the Women's Council, ran a series of electoral workshops in order to encourage their participation in the Iqaluit elections. The promotional material was afterwards used in other communities. Prior to being elected, Eva Ariak, currently

the highest authority, participated in these workshops along with four women who had attended the 2009 workshop, and they all became involved in the elections and were elected to the municipal council.

At present, the Government of Nunavut, in cooperation with the Qullit Women's Council, the Nunavut Tunngavik and Qikiqtani Inuit Association, the Nunavut Arctic College, Nunavut women's organizations, and the federal governments are planning the Arnait Nipingita Leadership Summit aimed at supporting and empowering women's leadership initiatives in Nunavut. 🗨️

## Historia de la opresión de las mujeres

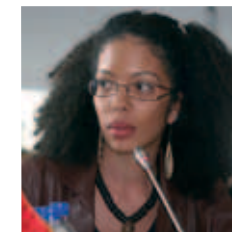
**E**manicipatory feminism has focused on analyzing the uniqueness of women's oppression as a result of the loss of freedom and their confinement to the private sphere, with defeats in the political-legal field.

This process is intimately related to the emergence of private property, which made women become the property of men.

- The recognition of women's right to vote in Brazil (in 1932) goes back to a continuous struggle started before the Proclamation of the Republic in 1889:
- 1910: Creation of the Women's Republican Party.
- 1922: Creation of the *Federação Brasileira pelo Progresso Feminino* aimed at denouncing the *incomplete citizenship* status of women in Brazil.
- 1932: the female vote is approved in the Electoral Code of 1932; however, it was only under the 1946 Constitution that female vote became fully and unrestrictedly enforced.

## Women's Rights

The United Nations Organization – UN established a Decade for Women between 1975 and 1985. The opening event was the World Conference on Women held in Mexico and then in



## Political Experience as an Afro-descendant Woman

**Angela Guimaraes,**  
AFRO-DESCENDANT WOMAN FROM BRAZIL

- Holds a degree in Social Sciences from the Universidade Federal de Bahia, with a concentration in Social History and Afro-Brazilian Culture at Universidad Metropolitana.
- Activist of the students' movement, where she started as a militant.
- Twice director of the Academic Center for Social Sciences of Universidad Federal de Bahia.
- General Coordinator of the University's Undergraduates Central Directory.
- 2003: Coordinator of the Social Sciences North and Northeast Meeting on the Development of Social Sciences in Latin America.
- 2003 – 2004: Parliamentary advisor for the Municipal Council of El Salvador, Bahia.
- 2004 – 2007: Developer of Public Policies on Women, Youth, and the Promotion of Racial Equality at the Social Redress Department in San Sebastián del Passé de Bahia. During this period, a series of conferences were held on women's empowerment and participation in power spaces.
- Active participant of the campaign titled "16 days of activism to end violence against women".
- Since 2007 she is regular counsellor at the National Youth Council on issues of black youths and public policies by the Young Women's Committee.
- Since 2009 she represents civil society at the State Youth Council. She was one of the coordinators and rapporteur of the State Youth Conference in Bahia and of the First National Youth Conference. Has broad experience in public policies monitoring and follow-up, and several publications on the above topics.

Copenhagen in 1980. The Decade ended with the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi.

The Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women – CEDAW was approved in 1979. At The World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993, women's organizations and NGOs urged to declare the universality and indivisibility of human rights so as to include women. Human rights are conceived from the historical perspective of the construction of citizenship and equality, in a political context that requires the separation of Church and State.

In this scenario of achievement of human rights and space for denunciation, the UN encouraged the organization of the following conferences: Rio de Janeiro (1992), Cairo (1994), Beijing (1995), Copenhagen (1995), and Durban (2001). At these meetings, different women's issues and demands were brought to the forefront. There is greater global awareness of the need to generate change and adopt a series of legislative and judicial initiatives and public policies that may contribute to guaranteeing the respect for and enjoyment of fundamental human rights and citizenship of women.

### Latin America's Outlook

There is no doubt of the correlation between the overall political context and women's political rights: Only a democratic environment can produce legislation to guarantee their rights.

The feminist movement expanded in Europe and North America in the 1970s, while military governments emerged in Brazil and in many Latin American countries with no progress in the field of women's rights. The '80s saw the strengthening of the movement in Brazil through the *Diretas Já*, which marked a transition to a democratic model. In 1987, the women's movement put great pressure on the National Constitutional Convention achieving key victories in the 1988 Federal Constitution.

The '90s was a period of neoliberal expansion throughout the Continent, which implied a step backward in several women's rights victories, especially in the labour field. In the 2000s there is an increased debate on domestic and sexual violence, on the acknowledgement of sexual and reproductive rights, and on sexual diversity as "new" human rights.

### Brazil's 1998 Constitution

Hundreds of feminist leaders arrived in Brasilia in 1987 to hand in the Women's Letter to the President of the National Constitutional Convention and to representatives of several parties. It was a very relevant document containing a number of claims stemming from a decade of women's political involvement in different areas of society life.

The previous decade had seen the emergence of a movement fighting for democratization and women's rights and equality, and against patriarchy and racism. Inequality still exists

in Brazil; there is a deep inequality between men and women regarding access to spaces of public power. Of all Latin American and Caribbean countries, Brazil has the greatest imbalance in this respect. *"Women only account for 8.9% of all senators and federal deputies."*

### Assessment of a Decade: 2000-2010

The First National Conference of Brazilian Women, held in 2002, approved a Feminist Political Platform that would steer the movement's actions and influence the general electoral process in 2002 (presidential, provincial governments, federal senate, and federal and provincial parliaments). Its major achievements included the following:

- Legislative reforms to achieve 50% of gender participation;
- Securing resources for women's political education and training in parties;
- Strengthening participatory democracy by increasing mechanisms that facilitate access to power, and by providing gender, racial, and ethnic equality;
- Strengthening civil society movements by increasing women's participation in political decision-making spaces;
- Creating spaces where young women may discuss the uniqueness of their generational status;

- Creation of the Special Secretariat of Policies for Women with ministerial status accountable for formulating and implementing public policies for women.
- Holding two national conferences on policies for women, which were widely attended by people and women's movements.
- Passing of the *Maria da Penha* Law (11340/2006) which condemned domestic and family violence against women; adjustment of the quota law to have 30% of women in party nominations, which should now be completed and not merely reserved, as happened in the past.
- In most welfare plans implemented by the current government women figure as the main beneficiaries, such as in *Family-bag*, *Minha Casa* and *minha vida*.

### Struggles of Women Parliamentarians in Brazil

**Education.** Struggle for the creation of daycare centers, for the quality of basic public education, for the expansion of public technical high school education and public further education, for raising the wage floor, for improving the working conditions of male and female teachers, and for funding public education.

**Healthcare.** Providing healthcare to women (sexual and reproductive rights), and strengthening the Consolidated Healthcare System (SUS in Spanish).





Rights to groups historically excluded from comprehensive citizenship. Black population (quotas at university, healthcare policy for black population, Racial Equality Statute, policies for communities remaining in *quilombos*), indigenous population (demarcation of original lands, indigenous healthcare, indigenous education), LGBTs (civil union, criminalization of homophobia, National Plan to Combat Homophobia), youth (National Plan and Youth Rights Statute).

Also, women parliamentarians have reached broad-scope alliances with social sectors for the approval of legislative instruments guaranteeing the social and civic rights of most of the population, such as the Municipal Education Plan and the Municipal Reading Incentive Program involving male and female teachers, students, book publishers, book associations' representatives, and public power representatives, to name a few.

They have rescued traditionally invisible historic dates, facts, and important figures from oblivion: *21 de Janeiro* Law – Municipal and National Day against Religious Intolerance, homage to unrecognized Afro-descendant male and female members of religious orders and intellectuals, and non-aligned popular organizations.

They pay tribute to famous black people who had never been acknowledged by the parliaments, for example, *Zumbi dos Palmares*, *Maria Quitéria*. They supervise and follow up on the implementation of women's laws, such as the *Maria da Penha*

Law; they have contributed to setting up the *Casas Abrigo* (Shelters) and the program for the protection of victims and their families; they advocate for reforms to the Penal Code that criminalized adultery; they have implemented the debureaucratization of divorce, they advocate for the decriminalization of abortion as a matter of women's personal decision over their own bodies, and have also proposed the extension of maternity leave up to six months.

### Challenges posed by the Electoral Process

The greatest challenge is to obtain compliance with Law 12034/2009, specifically regarding the amendment to Article 10 of Law 9504/1997, which provides that "...each party or coalition shall complete a minimum 30% and a maximum 70% of candidates of each sex".

Unfortunately, based on the data published by the Supreme Electoral Court, we have seen that most political parties have not complied with the proportionality stipulated by law in this year's elections. The national average indicates that female candidates account for far less than the minimum 30% and reach a maximum of 21%, on average.<sup>3</sup>

It is imperative to approve a political reform guaranteeing public funding for the adoption of a quota law. This law will ensure parity through a close list of candidates alternating between men and women, which will be guaranteed through party funds. Penalties will be imposed to those parties that violate the law.

**The II National Plan of Policies on Women, an outcome of the I and II National Conference on Women's Policies Equality and Respect for Diversity** – The promotion of equality should be permeated by a focus on cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity, among others. It requires combating all kinds of inequalities through affirmative action policies and considering women's experiences in the formulation, implementation, monitoring, and assessment of public policies.

**Equity** – Ensuring that everyone has access to universal rights by means of universal actions, but also through specific and affirmative actions aimed at historically discriminated groups. It should treat the unequal unequally, with social justice, in order to acknowledge the special needs of different women's groups.

**Women's Autonomy** – Women's decision-making power over their own lives and bodies should be ensured, together with the possibility of influencing events in their community and country, and of breaking with the historical legacy, with cycles and spaces of dependency, exploitation, and subordination.

**State Secularism** – State public policies should be formulated and implemented independently of religious interference, so as to effectively guarantee the rights enshrined in the Federal Constitution and in different international instruments signed

and ratified by the Brazilian State, as a means for protecting women's and girls' human rights.

**Universality of Policies** – Full compliance with policies should be ensured in order to guarantee women's access to social, political, economic, cultural, and environmental rights. The principle of universality should be reflected in permanent policies at all three government levels, characterized by the indivisible, comprehensive, and intersectoral nature of rights, along with affirmative action policies, perceived as a necessary transition in the search for effective gender, racial, and ethnic equity and equality.

**Social Justice** – This implies acknowledging the need to redistribute the resources and wealth produced by society and to endeavour to overcome the social inequality affecting women.

**Transparency in Government Actions** – Respect for public administration principles should be guaranteed: Legality, publicity, and efficiency, with transparency in government actions and social control.

**Social Control & Participation** – Women's involvement and participation in the formulation, implementation, and social control of public policies should be guaranteed. 🗣️

<sup>3</sup> The *Partido Comunista do Brasil* – PCdoB (Brazilian Communist Party) is the oldest party in Brazil and the only one to have held, in 2006, a National Conference on women, and to have established in its by-laws the obligation to complete the minimum 30% with candidates of both genders, and allocate 5% of party resources for funding women candidates.



## Gender-oriented democracy: progress & setbacks

**Anunziatta Valdez,**  
FORMER ECUADOREAN DEPUTY AND THE  
PROMOTER OF THE QUOTA LAW



- Lawyer from Universidad Estatal de Guayaquil.
- Editorial writer at the Diario El Universo.
- Editor for several newspapers and magazines. Speaker at national and international conferences.
- Former President and founder of the *Sociedad Ecuatoriana para la Prevención del Maltrato al Menor* (SEPREMAN – Ecuadorean Society against Child Abuse), of the Ecuadorean Cooperation Committee with the OAS Inter-American Committee, Guayas Section (CECIM –Guayas),

and of the María Guare Foundation. Has created several Centers for the Prevention and Care of Intrafamily Violence in Guayaquil, in the Durán, Santa Elena, and Daule neighborhoods.

- As President of the María Guare Foundation, designed, proposed to the National Government, and participated in the creation of Women's Police Stations in Ecuador.
- 1998 – 2002: Former deputy for the Guayas province, President of the Committee on Women, Children, Family, and

Youth. Andean woman parliamentarian.

- Promoted processes related to issuing the Code of Childhood and Adolescence, the Youth Law, and Quota Law.
- Proposed and achieved the integration of women into the three branches of the Armed Forces, National Police, and Transit Committee of Guayas.
- She is currently Regional Deputy Director of Corporación Participación Ciudadana and a member of the Observatory of Fiscal Policy.

## Quota and parity in Ecuador

I will begin by mentioning some postulates of the so-called “Gender-Oriented Democracy”, which propounds “democratizing democracy”, and an organization based on equality among different people as a wide, revolutionary, and liberating proposal. In Ecuador, the political participation of Alfaro's *montoneras* favoured women's access to family, education, and paid labour rights during his government. Citizen rights materialized in 1929 thanks to the lonely and resolute struggle of Matilde Hidalgo Navarro, the first suffragette, the first female member of a city council, the first Ecuadorean woman to graduate as a medical doctor, and the first woman deputy, although she was never allowed to take office.

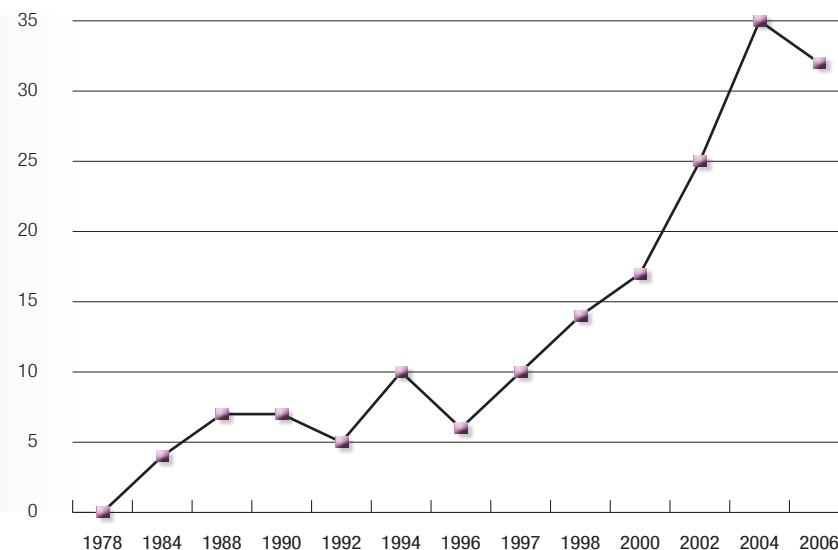
The political marginality of Ecuadorean women continued until late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, so much so that in 1984 women accounted for barely 4% in Ecuador's Parliament.

Women's wish to achieve full political participation became manifest at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For the 1998-2002 National Congress term, 17 women were appointed, that is 14% of all deputies. Some of us had spent long years fighting for women's rights.

At the time, there was a National Congress Committee on Women, Children, Youth, and Family with the following features:

- It had the same hierarchy of all other committees.
- It had a strategic plan whereby all bills were discussed with wide citizen participation.

## WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN ECUADOR'S PARLIAMENTS/ASSEMBLIES



- It was made up of seven (7) work subcommittees, according to their scope of action.

During my period as deputy, the Women's Subcommittee identified fifteen areas of action, and an equal number of working groups were set up with the women's movement. One of these groups was the driving force behind the electoral law amendment resulting in the so-called Quota Law. Its approval had wide national support. Broad strategic alliances were forged with the women's movement, the National Women's Council (CONAMU, as per its Spanish acronym), and some UN agencies.

#### Quota Law<sup>4</sup>

The contents of the Quota Law may be summarized as follows:

- An initial 30% of female candidates were established for lists of at-large candidates, which was increased by 5% in each election until reaching 50%.
- It provided for an order in the lists, i.e., alternate and sequential, between male and female candidates.
- It stipulates ethnic-cultural participation.
- It establishes the vote broken down by sex.
- It facilitates the voting of disabled people.
- It requires male and female candidates to submit a Work Plan prior to their registration.

- It requires the Supreme Electoral Court (today's National Electoral Council) to train citizens and political parties in gender issues.

All of us who have fought for the passing and adoption of the Quota Law did so in the pursuit of the acknowledgement of a right, of the possibility of being elected to a government post on the same terms as men. In this sense, it is the same struggle shared by the suffragettes a century before who had fought to win the right to vote. The decision of whom to vote for corresponds to each voter's choice, but it also depends on the political parties' promotion of their female candidates. There is no doubt that a greater participation of women in popularly elected posts or in decision-making positions effectively contributes to overcoming discrimination against women, as they are able to deliberate regardless of their gender awareness.

The struggle for female participation helps create a different social imaginary regarding women: They are rebellious and autonomous. The Ecuadorean experience shows that we have succeeded in influencing contemporary culture to the extent that it is almost "natural" to apply parity and equality between sexes in power positions in the public sector. For instance, **35% of women were elected for the 2008 National Constitutional Convention, a record in our country's history.**

However, the above achievements are the outcome of many years of struggle by organized women seeking compliance

with the Quota Law, which is paradigmatic and reveals the extent to which women's rights were openly violated in front of the country's political and legal institutions, which did nothing in return.

Between 2000 and 2007, and with the law already in force, the Supreme Electoral Court interfered with a series of "guidelines" or "regulations" that dexterously interpreted the meaning of "alternation" and "sequencing" regarding the location of male and female candidate positions, and favoured male candidates by skipping two, three, or more positions and ignoring the basic notion of alternation. All this was done in complicity with the political parties or movements making up the Court. Furthermore, several attempts were made at the National Congress to amend or revoke the law. The women parliamentarians, together with the women's movement, pursued political and legal actions in their defence, namely:

- Unconstitutionality claims
- Request for impeachment
- Administrative proceedings
- Electoral remedies: Petition for reinstatement / challenging / appealing / complaining
- Request for prosecution of Supreme Electoral Court members on a charge of breach of public duty

- Complaint against the Ecuadorean State before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
- Citizen oversight of the Supreme Electoral Court and Provincial Electoral Courts
- Militant women's oversight of political parties
- Lobbying with men and women deputies, the media, and observer missions
- Review of lists at a national and provincial level by women's oversight groups
- Manual system for checking lists by women's oversight groups and Supreme Electoral Court staff
- List checking software
- Forms for list registration and challenging

#### General Electoral Law Regulations. March 2000

The law established how alternation and sequencing should be implemented. The lists of at-large candidates had to include at least 30% of women for the main posts and 30% for alternate positions. The alternation and sequencing in the presentation of lists had to follow an odd or even number order; the notion of sequencing was understood as the series of possible combinations on the list. In the case of candidates for three to five positions, one or two places were skipped; for six or more positions, two or three places were skipped, and so on.

<sup>4</sup> R.O. Supplement N. 20 of 18 February 2000.

## The Struggle to Enforce the Quota Law

As a result of the great pressure exerted by women's organizations, the Constitutional Court issued Resolution No. 028-2002 ordering the Supreme Electoral Court to abide by the following decision in future:

...the challenged article defines alternation and sequencing; however, the content of such definitions does not guarantee equal participation of men and women, less still because, when referring to sequencing, it regulates the series of possible combinations, which is an affront to the equality of conditions as it stipulates that a woman could be placed on the ballot after the inclusion of two or three men.

However, the Supreme Electoral Court did not abide by the Constitutional Court's resolution in the elections of 2002, 2004, and 2006, and turned to a series of tricks just upon closing the registration of candidacies. From 2000 to 2007, following the resolute struggle of women and the country's institutional crisis that led to the removal of 51 male and female deputies, elections were called to appoint the new assembly members. On May 23, 2007, the Supreme Electoral Court, through Resolution PLE-TSE-/-23-5-2007, finally resolved:

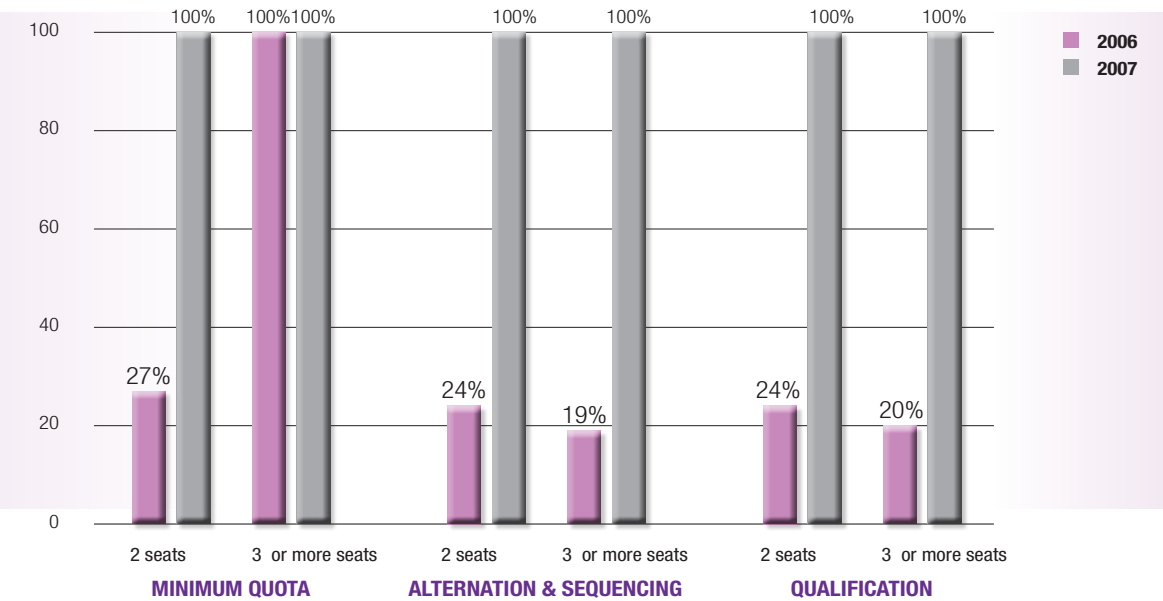
**Article 41.- Representation Formula** - According to the representation formula of gender equality, the candidate registration process shall feature a man-woman or vice versa, with gender equality between main and alternate candidates, and keeping alternation and sequencing between candidates.

### QUOTA LAW ENFORCEMENT

Electoral year	Type of election	Quota	Alternation
2000	Provincial	30% In force	In force/not applied
2002	National	35% In force	In force/not applied
2004	Provincial	40% In force	In force/not applied
2006	National	45% In force	In force/not applied
2007*	National	50% In force/applied	In force/applied
2009	National	50% In force/applied	In force/applied

\* Constitutional Convention

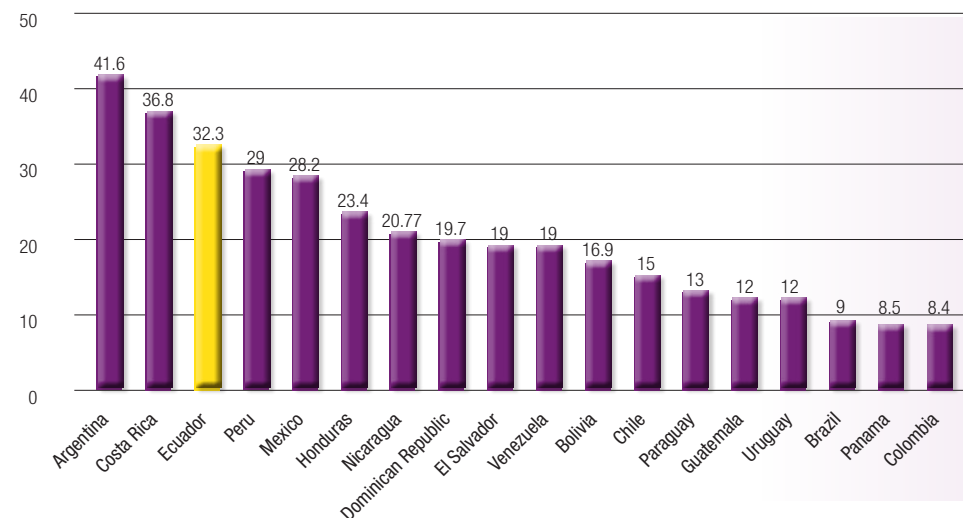
## QUOTA, ALTERNATION AND QUALIFICATION OF LISTS COMPARATIVE CHART (2006/2007)



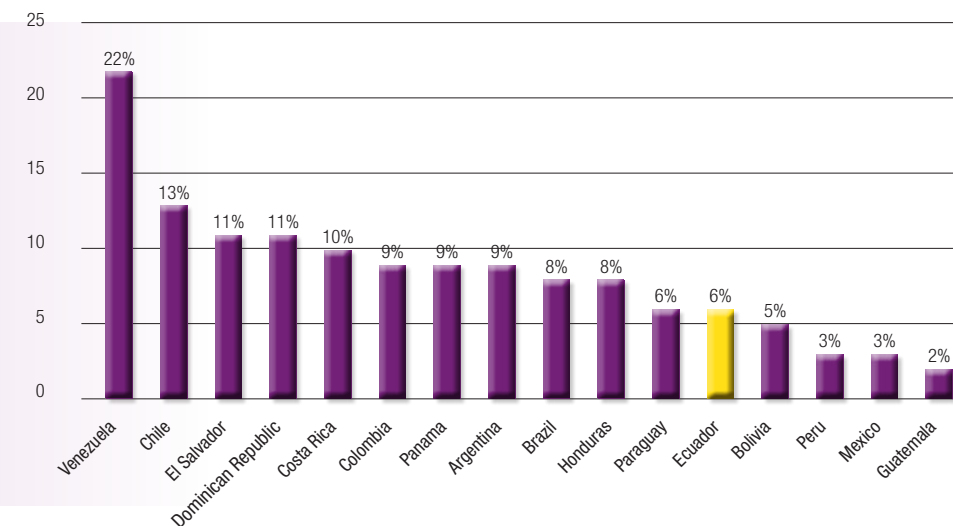
### Quota Law Outcomes

- It contributed to an extraordinary increase in women's participation: Assembly 35%, Municipal Councils 30%; Parish Boards 33%;
- It encouraged women's political affiliation and commitment to a cause that favoured the unity of the women's movement;
- It led to a public and political debate on women's unequal political representation;
- It contributed to the incorporation of other groups which have been traditionally excluded or of others which have been organized only recently: Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, environmental groups, urban-marginal movements, to name a few.
- It allowed 35% of women to be elected as members of the National Constitutional Convention;
- It allowed a large number of female members of the National Constitution Convention to be democratically elected.

### WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICAN PARLIAMENTS



### WOMEN MAYORS



### Quota Law Limitations

- Quotas only relate to a part of the electoral system, i.e., the list of at-large candidates, and fail to include designated positions.
- There are no instruments to guarantee that women hold the top slots on the lists.
- There are no instruments to guarantee equal distribution of electoral publicity.

### Parity Benefits

- Parity does not only relate to numerical equality but to a set of elements that provide for the exercise of the right to participate while enjoying equality before the law, equal opportunities, equal treatment, and true equality.
- It implies political affiliation and opportunities to develop a political career in political organizations.



- It comprises equal participation in all public institutions, either as a result of elections or not.
- It generates a political culture that permeates the private and social spheres.

#### Quotas and Parity in the New Constitution

- The Constitution in force has introduced **gender equality** as part of its text, and it acknowledges parity and quotas in political participation, with alternation and sequencing.
- Article 65 stipulates that the State shall **promote** equal representation of men and women in nominated or designated positions in the public administration, at management and decision-making levels, as well as in political parties and movements.

- The lists of at-large candidates shall observe female participation in an alternate and sequential way.
- The State shall adopt affirmative action measures to guarantee the participation of discriminated sectors.

#### Conclusions

- The Quota Law and the struggle for its approval and enforcement led to a path of no return, which has not only influenced the legal rule but has also had an impact on collective consciousness, thus creating new paradigms;
- We are happy to have been part of a process that is helping change history for women and for our country. 🇪🇨

*“The Republic of Bolivia adopts a participatory, representative, and communitarian democratic form of government, with equal conditions between men and women.”*

Bolivian Constitution, Article 11

The 17<sup>th</sup> Political Constitution of the State was approved in a referendum on 25 January 2009 by over 64% of male and female voters. It is the first time that such an important document is drafted by a Constitutional Convention convened by law and representing all sectors of Bolivia. It is the outcome of a protracted struggle by different social movements, indigenous peoples, and women, who for more than fifteen years have fought to have their specific rights included in the Constitution.

The new wording acknowledges equal participation of men and women under equal conditions, regarding both their fundamental and political rights. This is a crucial step toward the inclusion of the gender perspective in the new laws, as well as toward women's participation in the domestic and public and political spheres.

The Constitution stipulates a priority order for organic laws, and a deadline of 180 days was set for these laws to be passed following the start of the new parliamentary term. It is important to acknowledge the efforts made by the Plurinational Legislative Assembly in introducing gender equality in these five fundamental laws, but even more so the affirmative actions undertaken to improve women's participation in the political sphere.



**Deputy Cecilia Ayllón Quinteros,**  
PRESIDENT OF THE PLURAL JUSTICE COMMISSION,  
MINISTRY OF LEGAL DEFENSE OF THE STATE (BOLIVIA)  
Introduced by Deputy Marianela Paco Durán (Bolivia)

- Holds masters degrees in Administration of Justice (Universidad San Francisco Javier de Chuquisaca-Instituto de la Judicatura de Bolivia), and in Further Education (Universidad Militar de las Fuerzas Armadas)
- Specialist in scientific research.
- Practising attorney with two postgraduate diplomas: Criminal Procedure Law and Economic Criminal Law
- National Deputy.
- President of the Committee on Plural Justice, Public Ministry, and State Legal Defence.
- Judge at Sentencing Court No 4.
- Judge of the Drugs Court.
- Teacher at the Instituto de la Judicatura, Universidad Tomas Frías, Lawyers Association – School of Forensic Studies.
- Speaker at several seminars and workshops.
- President of the Cochabamba Magistrates Association, elected for two consecutive periods.



## 1. Electoral Body Law

It acknowledges the principles of equality, parity, and alternation. Therefore, **parity of elections** is recognized for electing the Electoral Body authorities. The Plurinational Electoral Body adopts and promotes gender equality and equal opportunities between men and women in the exercise of their individual and collective rights.

The law stipulates the structure, obligations, and powers of the Supreme Electoral Court (TSE, as per its Spanish acronym).

**Structure** – It will include seven (7) voting members of whom at least three (3) shall be women and two (2) shall be indigenous people.

**Obligations** – Verify, throughout all stages of the electoral process, the strict compliance with the principle of equality, guaranteeing parity and alternation between men and women in the presentation of national candidates by the political organizations, as established by the Electoral System Law.

**Powers** - Verify the strict compliance with parity and alternation criteria between men and women throughout the stages of presentation of the lists of male and female candidates by national political organizations.

## 2. Law on the Judiciary

It is aimed at regulating the structure, organization, and operation of the Judiciary. It is based on legal plurality and pluralism, having the same constitutional hierarchy as the Legislative, the

Executive and the Electoral Body, and it acts on the basis of independence, separation, coordination, and cooperation.

It respects interculturality and gender equality in the nomination and pre-selection of candidates for the Supreme Court and the Agro-Environmental Court, with the new provision that half of the pre-qualified candidates should be women.

For the election of **male and female Magistrates**, the Plurinational Legislative Assembly will select up to six (6) candidates for each department, in two separate lists of men and women, guaranteeing that 50% of the selected candidates are women.

If the selected candidate is a man, the most voted woman on his list will be the alternate magistrate. If the selected candidate is a woman, the most voted man on her list will be the alternate magistrate. If any of the alternate magistrates resigns, one of the remaining candidates on the lists will be summoned, while respecting the order of precedence and alternation between men and women.

The male and female regular voting members of the **Departmental Courts of Justice** are elected by the Supreme Court by a majority vote of half-plus-one of the members present, based on the lists submitted by the *Consejo de la Magistratura* (Magistrates' Council). The Supreme Court shall guarantee that fifty per cent of the magistrates chosen are women.

It should be noted that all selection processes will respect the order of precedence and alternation between men and women,

and that non-compliance with the obligation to verify and guarantee the principles of equality, parity, and alternation between men and women on the lists of male and female candidates throughout the electoral process stages is considered to be a serious offence under the law.

## 1. Electoral System Law:

It includes equality and equity among the principles of intercultural democracy, based on the complementarity between direct and participatory democracy, representative democracy, and communitarian democracy in the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

One of the principles introduced is Equality. Bolivian democracy is based on gender equality and equal opportunities for men and women in the exercise of their individual and collective rights, by applying parity and alternation in the lists of male and female candidates for all government and representation positions, in the internal election of leaders and candidates in political organizations, and in indigenous, original, and peasant peoples' and nations' own rules and procedures.

The chapter on Citizenship and Political Rights provides that the Plurinational State should guarantee the comprehensive, free, and equal exercise of rights established by the Political Constitution of the State to Bolivian men and women, without any discrimination whatsoever, where all men and women have the right to participate freely, either individually or collectively, in the development, exercise, and control of public power, either directly or through their representatives.

Bolivia's intercultural democracy guarantees gender equality and equal opportunities between men and women.

## 2. Plurinational Constitutional Court Law

The wording of the law highlights the use of non-sexist language. Male and female magistrate candidates for the Plurinational Constitutional Court should submit their applications before the Plurinational Legislative Assembly. In addition, such candidacies may be proposed by social organizations of indigenous, original, and peasant peoples and nations, and by the civil society at large. Of the twenty eight (28) candidates, 50% should be women, and the list of prequalified candidates should be submitted to the Plurinational Electoral Body.

## 3. Framework Law on Autonomies

This law uses a non-sexist language and introduces the principle of gender equality, whereby the freedoms and rights of men and women are guaranteed as stipulated by the Political Constitution of the State, thus generating the conditions and means that may contribute to achieving social justice, equal opportunities, sustained and complete development in autonomous territorial units, in the establishment of their governments, in public policies, and in the access to and exercise of the public administration.

It regulates the system of autonomies, and its sphere of application relates to central government bodies and autonomous territorial units. The law includes:



- Types of autonomy
- Procedure to achieve an autonomous status
- Procedure to draft Statutes and Charters
- Competence and economic and financial systems
- Coordination between the central government level and autonomous territorial units
- Overall participation and social control framework

Gender equality acknowledgement is ratified in the establishment of autonomous territorial unit governments. Furthermore, the principles of equity and equal opportunities is introduced as a goal of the System of Autonomies, thus guaranteeing people's access to education, health, and labour, while respecting their diversity, without any discrimination or exploitation, enjoying full social justice, and promoting decolonization.

The autonomous territorial units shall adopt a participatory, representative, and communitarian democratic form of government, with gender equality. They shall draft their institutional budget considering the completeness and coordination of planning, programming, investment, and budgeting processes, further introducing instruments of social control and participation within a framework of fiscal transparency and gender equality.

The law promotes a fair and balanced territorial development, with gender equality and a focus on the economy/production and on human development. It provides for the adoption of better strategies to meet development objectives with social and gender equality and equal opportunities, and for the implementation of a General Development Plan based on the concept of good living as the paramount goal of the Plurinational State.

Multi-year budgets and programs, annual budgets and operational plans should consider investment projects, programs, and policies based on social and gender equality, while ensuring a real budget that may meet the differentiated needs and demands of both men and women.

It is necessary to underscore the significance of having a Political Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia that may cause the gender approach to crosscut all policies and acknowledge women's specific rights, but with Assembly members and part of the women's movement. I am also aware that the achievements, roadblocks, lessons, fears, and challenges regarding the process of acknowledging women's rights should be discussed, and that there is still a long way to go to institutionalize gender within the State and to make people respect the rights obtained in order to exercise them. ♀

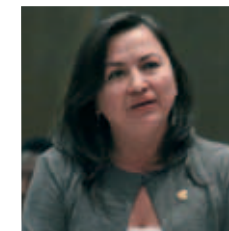
The spaces where we may now share our experiences and strengthen our political endeavor are a clear example of women's greater participation in the political sphere. However, the congressional seats we have obtained are the result of struggles, demonstrations, investigations and theoretical constructions, of peaceful and perhaps not so peaceful assemblies by so many women who dreamt of equality, freedom, and equity.

Spanish reporter Soledad Gallego-Díaz said that "You don't need to be Jewish to combat anti-Semitism, just as you don't need to be black to fight racism. Unfortunately, sometimes it seems you have to be a woman to combat discrimination against women."

### Progress Made

A large number of laws acknowledge and safeguard women's rights. These laws have all been the outcome of the pressure exerted by the women's movement upon the State to adopt the commitments undertaken by the country within the framework of such relevant international instruments such as the CEDAW and the Belém do Pará Conference, in order to obtain the approval of the following legislation:

- Law against Women and Domestic Violence;
- Free Maternity and Child Care Law;
- Organic Law on Health;



**Gina Godoy,**  
ECUADOR ASSEMBLY MEMBER

### Assessing the enforcement of parity democracy: 2008 constitution

- Lawyer.
- Activist fighting for the human rights of girls, boys, adolescents, and women. Militant fighting for the eradication of intrafamily and gender violence.
- Former director of the CEPAM Guayaquil legal service.
- Former government official at the Ministry of Policy Coordination.
- Constitutional Convention Member for Guayas Province in Montecristi, and a member of the Justice and the Fight against Corruption Committee.
- Transition Assembly member participating in the Legislation and Oversight Committee.
- Her work has been focused on the defence of social justice rights, the rights of women, children, and adolescents, among other priority groups.
- Re-elected as Assembly Member for Guayas Province, and currently a member of the Committee on Autonomous Governments, Decentralization, Competencies, and Territorial Organization.
- Has received several awards in recognition of her work in the defence of human rights from Ecuador's Office of the Ombudsman, the National Childhood and Adolescence Council, Cantonal Council of Rural Parish Boards, as well as from GLBTI groups, in recognition of her fight against all kinds of discrimination.
- Current President of the Ecuadorean Tránsito Amaguaña Parliamentary Group.
- In July 2010 she was elected President of the Inter-American Parliamentary Group on Population and Development.



<sup>5</sup> A study on political parties in Ecuador, published by FLACSO-Ecuador: “*Participación Política y Ciudadanía*” authored by María Fernanda Cañete, reveals the inequality existing in the political parties’ leadership positions that shaped the political agenda from 1978 until 2006:

- Democratic Left: In 32 years it only incorporated 10 (ten) women in leadership positions, vis-à-vis 343 men.
- Social Christian Party: 13 (thirteen) women vis-à-vis 290 men.
- Ecuadorean Roldosist Party: 24 (twenty-four) women vis-à-vis 527 men.
- People’s Democracy: 30 (thirty) women vis-à-vis 265 men.

- Amendments to the Criminal Code that define crimes related to illegal human trafficking, pornography, and sexual exploitation;
- Public policies against illegal human trafficking;
- National Plan for the Eradication of gender violence against women, boys, girls, and adolescents.
- Quota Law.

The 1997-2000 period witnessed the main struggles to enforce the quota rules stipulated by the Electoral law, whereby the list of candidates had to feature at least thirty per cent (30%) of women among the main candidates and thirty per cent (30%) of women among alternate candidates, in an alternate and sequential way.

Although this rule was gradually enforced, its sequencing and alternation was only adopted in 2007, when Ecuador decided to embark on a new state restructuring process through the discussion of a new constitutional framework. During that year and on the occasion of the Constitutional Convention elections, the Supreme Electoral Court, under the constant pressure of women’s organizations, adopted the resolution passed by the Constitutional Court, which stated that the principles of alternation and sequencing should be ensured in the elections as a guarantee of parity. The Supreme Electoral Court itself qualified the lists and oversaw the compliance with parity requirements.

Despite fluctuations prior to 2007, it is evident that the adoption of the Quota Law as an instrument towards parity has been

decisive: From 2002 to 2007, the number of female authorities was increased almost 9 times, from 183 to 1,643. Notwithstanding this, the internal practices of political parties have neither facilitated nor encouraged the participation of women in leadership positions, which shows there is still a long way to go regarding the issue of parity<sup>5</sup>.

During the Constitutional Convention process (2007), an attempt was made to change at least three factors that directly affect women’s political participation: 1) the principles governing the law in connection with parties and elections; 2) the role of political parties in promoting parity, cooperation, and equality between men and women; and 3) the issues faced by us women when trying to reconcile the public and private spheres, especially because reproductive work is still not seen as a female task.

The 2008 Constitution of the Republic included three major achievements in terms of gender:

1. It declares gender violence to be entitled to constitutional protection.
2. It forces the State to adopt affirmative action measures aimed at narrowing the gap in women’s participation and representation in the political space.
3. It establishes a parity status between men and women and determines its enforcement in all decision-making levels of public power.

Furthermore, the Constitution states that parity will be guaranteed in the Electoral Function and the Legislative Function, unlike the Judicial and Executive Function, where “efforts will be made toward” parity. Also, it was stipulated by law that for the Transparency and Social Control Function affirmative action measures should be adopted to set up the Council on Citizen Participation and Social Control.

The New Democracy Code has been a major step forward in the field of political rights, as it exposes the problems inherent to electoral processes: funding, internal party democracy through primary elections, and creation of lists while respecting the principles of parity, alternation, and sequencing. These actions ensure parity in the participation of elections but not in the results; there are currently 40 women as regular Assembly members (2% less than in the Constitutional Convention) 2 women as provincial prefects, and 13 women mayors.<sup>6</sup>

There are regulatory and enforcement challenges to be faced if we are to make the affirmative action measures tilt the balance of women’s participation, to get enough political and economic support from parties and movements, to promote women

candidates, and to have political campaigns conceived with a non-masculinized perspective of the public space. The women who are in decision-making spheres should work together with social organizations to encourage leadership and the creation of spaces for debate and the emergence of women as new political actors.

Anyhow, a promising road lies ahead. The National Assembly passed the new Law on Further Education providing for several affirmative action measures that will enable women to access studies that were historically intended solely for men, along with other measures aimed at having equal number of men and women in university and at further education decision-making levels.

Another achievement was the open selection process undergone by the Council on Citizen Participation and Social Control and the equal quota of men and women members. Also, more and more women hold designated positions in the Executive. The National Assembly includes a multiparty Parliamentary Group on Women’s Rights with over fifty per cent of male and female members committed to the development of rules guaranteeing equity and equality. ♀

<sup>6</sup> Based on data from the last *Time Use Survey* (CONAMU. Quito, 2006), on average women work 18 hours more than men.



## Women politicians and the media: a controversial relationship?

**Cecilia Medina,**  
ECUADOREAN COMMUNICATOR<sup>7</sup>



- Social Communicator, holds a master's degree in Social Sciences with a major in Gender and Development from FLA-CSO; completed a diploma in Gender and Healthcare Policies at FLACSO - Ecuador.
- Member of *Coordinadora Ecuatoriana por el Accionar Juvenil* – CEPAJ (Ecuadorian Agency for Youth in Action) and of SIGNIS Ecuador, an organization of Roman Catholic communicators in Ecuador, where she served as Executive Secretary.
- Has conducted several investigations into sexual crimes, migration, health, and sexual and reproductive rights.
- Current advisor of Assembly Member Gina Godoy Andrade.

### Building women's image

In order to explain the complex image-building relations, and the mixture of political marketing and advertising around women, I shall refer to Oliver Stone's new movie "South of the Border" about Latin American center-left governments. There is footage showing Stone walking by President Cristina Fernández and asking her: "How many pairs of shoes do you have?" To this, she quickly answers "I don't know. I've never counted them. Why do you ask me that? They never ask a man about how many pairs of shoes he has". Despite being a filmmaker known in his country as an observer of the mechanisms of power, he could not help being trapped by one of them, because the construction of messages in the media is related to the way concepts are positioned. However, the fact that his question had had an impact on the people also says something about the media and their relationship with the AUDIENCES.

Thanks to our experience and theories on communication, we human beings have managed to go from producing messages conceived to "impact male and female consumers" to seeking access to their minds through a BRAND!

The fact of turning our ideas into a concept that is rapidly acknowledged and accepted is known as positioning. What has positioning gender- and women-related concepts meant for the media? We may start with the most basic concepts repeated by the different feminist currents over and over again: The relationship of women with socially assigned roles like maternity,

eroticization, feelings of tenderness, understanding, submissiveness, unconditional love, sentimental heroism, which we see every day in the construction of sexist advertising. The simplest and less creative constructions position women with these attributes to objectify them.

This positioning of what a woman is thought to be has led to **inequalities**. For instance, in Europe, the media are made up of 47% of women, on average; however, they earn 20% less than men. But the data concerning gender are even more worrying: The topic of **discrimination and stereotypes** is acknowledged as a relevant issue in 10 out of 17 reporters' associations, but only 3 organizations include guidelines to eradicate gender stereotypes and discrimination. What is even more interesting is that the average age of women is 28 years old vis-à-vis 50 years old in men.

What is the media "coverage" of women? Based on preliminary data from the 2010 Global Media Monitoring Project conducted in 42 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, women continue to be poorly represented in the news coverage. On the one hand, only 16% of the news is related to women; and on the other hand, there is one expert woman every five men interviewed by the mass media. Issues related to the Beijing Platform for Action account for just 1.5 of coverage, and only 8% of the news criticizes gender stereotypes, while 48% of the news reinforces them. These are preliminary data as the monitoring was carried out in 130 countries from all continents.

Very interesting monitoring studies have been conducted on women's representation in the media since 1995, and the 2005 data show that stereotypes continue to be used to represent women: 19% of the news shows women as victims as compared to 8% in men; 17% are qualified in the messages as wife, daughter, mother, as compared to only 5% in men.

Freedom of speech is also restricted for women producers or writers. For example, the American Library Association informs that the books labelled as the most problematic by the public opinion are those by women writers who have approached topics on the female body, sexuality, and gender violence, and which have been condemned as "gruesome" and as "encouraging homosexuality". The list includes Alice Walker's "The Color Purple", and Lynda Madaras' "What's Happening to My Body? Book for Girls: A Growing Up Guide for Parents and Daughters".

With regard to women politicians, for instance, studies conducted in **Spain** indicate that **women parliamentarians are treated differently as compared to men politicians**, because their figure is trivialized by exposing aspects of their private life or image, and stereotypes are reinforced that relate trust, compassion, and commitment with women, and security and aggressiveness with men. Thus, women prefer topics connected to education, health, rights, the environment, and social welfare, while men tend to choose fields such as economy, conflicts, national defence, and foreign policy.

<sup>7</sup> Male and female communicators at this table belong to *Radialistas Apasionadas y Apasionados*.



When women develop strategies of political incidence, their scenario analysis should consider “their audience’s attitudes”, which may be conditioned by individual interests, fundamental values, cultural determining factors, religious beliefs, ideologies, political stances, family and friendship relations, professional environment, economic possibilities, but also by beliefs on gender roles. In fact, political campaigns usually tap into these attitudes to position certain “values” like nationalism, progress, equality, and respect for traditions.

The relationship of women politicians with the media to convey messages to male and female voters is also controversial, because it has been highlighted that the notion of leadership,

for instance, is associated with men. It has been noted that women politicians are requested to increase their work performance, but also their capacity to successfully juggle their private and public life. In other words, it is the **women politicians themselves who may easily encourage the perpetuation of gender roles.**

If we wish to change the dynamics between politics and the media and not only ask ourselves about the most suitable channels to approach the electorate, we should also wonder which messages can be constructed to capitalize on all the media available, how we can review the values related to what is “feminine”, how we can make our language more inclusive, clear, and accurate. ♀

**T**hink with your head, have something to say, grab your audience’s attention, or know how to say it are all Jesús Martín Barbero’s wise tips regarding male and female communicators. Politicians, and in this case women politicians, are communicators by their very nature. You, Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, have already walked the first steps, think with your head, and have something to say.

But, can we really say that you have grabbed your audience’s attention, and that you know how to say what you know? I am asking this only based on Barbero’s statements and fully convinced that an active and proactive presence and communication in the media is a key part of the exercise of political power, of exposure, and the encounter with the population in a media-oriented society like our Latin American society. If you are not in the media, you are nowhere. In the past, the popularity of politicians and policies was measured in the public squares. Today, the public squares are the TV, the radio, the print media, and the Internet. We are experiencing the mass mediation of politics.<sup>8</sup>

What is at stake in the media? The public agendas, the scenarios from which power is exerted, the influence on decision-making. And this power game exposes economic, partisan, and also gender interests. How many women politicians come out in the media? How many of them are featured as protagonists of “serious issues” like politics, the economy, or strategic assets? And how are they featured? Peru has a rather handsome woman minister, and the media call her *Miss Minister*, ignoring



**Tachi Arriola Iglesias,**  
PERUVIAN COMMUNICATOR

- Producer of radio series on women’s rights for *Radialistas Apasionadas y Apasionados*.
- Trainer and consultant on radio and gender in several Latin American countries.
- Social communicator with a master’s degree in Communication.

## Women and the political word in the mass media

<sup>8</sup> Barbero Jesús-Martin, *Al Sur de la Modernidad*, ILLI, Serie Nuevo Siglo, 2001, p. 80



her performance in the three ministries she has worked at or her commitment to equality between men and women citizens. During last year's inauguration ceremonies of Latin American authorities, full details were given of the clothing, hairstyle, and charming appearance of women presidents and ministers. And of men politicians too.

Even politics have style. And American image consultant Dorothy Sarnof's words are very revealing when she says that "opinion polls indicate that only 8% of the audience pays attention to the content of a speech, 42% to the looks of the speaker, and 50% to the way he/she speaks"<sup>9</sup>. This analysis may sound too trivial or marketing-oriented, but there is no doubt about the value of words.

When women want to become decision-makers without getting caught up in entertainment and show, they have to overcome many barriers so that the public, the audience, the citizens, and media men and women consider them worthy of attention, regardless of their clothes, hairstyle or physical appearance. We are faced with pre-established ways and styles we are forced to adopt and which are inconsistent with our experiences as women. How can we make our well argued, discussed, deep political discourse also sound moving and reach our audience's heart and mind? How can we communicate non-violently? How can our words gain our interviewers' respect, how can we avoid misrepresentation of what was said? And how can we make our presence more equal vis-à-vis men politicians?

## The Basics

Omar Rincón, in his book *Los Tele-presidentes: cerca del pueblo, lejos de la democracia*<sup>10</sup>, describes the *comunikit* used by politicians to impress their audience, followers, and voters. Could the women parliamentarians be inspired by it and produce a *fempolitikit*?

Let us think of different ways of creating our *fempolitikit* and its main tenets:

**Affectivity.** Women can reach citizens through a really affectionate speech, close to their needs and tastes. By default, and due to the social construction of gender, women are programmed by their feelings, while men are disoriented in this respect. Women bet on change based on subjectivity, on trying to understand the other person and his/her feelings. We are capable of creating empathy, of respecting people and putting ourselves in their shoes.

**A Style of Our Own.** A useful element of *comunikit* is the need to have a well-defined personality, a unique and innovative style, charisma and leadership based on truth, without any demagoguery or populism. And with no copycatting. Avoiding acting like a prima donna and trying to be seen and present, even if we say something trivial.

**Life Stories.** We women express ourselves easier through words. And the stories we may tell are based on true facts, on

looking at and participating in everyday life. We do not make up stories that crumble in the face of reality.

**Hopeful Rhetoric.** Women's discourse is closer to people's sensitivity. Perhaps as their words have been silenced throughout history, they are now listened to, discussed, and believed. Women are capable of conveying hope since this hope has helped us along the years.

**Incorruptible Ethics.** Women are traditionally seen as more honest. Regardless of whether this is true or false, women should try and stick to the old saying of "not only looking like queens but being queens", in the sense of keeping consistency of words and actions, which is the most difficult thing to achieve in the public and private life. "When you don't live as you think, you end up thinking as you live", warns Gabriel Marcel, a French author and philosopher.

**Communicative Conviction.** Learning to argue and not just repeating the campaign slogan. Emphasizing ideas and not party dogmas; debating, forgetting affronts, offences, aggressiveness, which is so often found among men politicians. Forgetting about opinion polls and surveys in order to say things based on our convictions, and believing in and standing up for our words. Addressing people warmly and on the same footing, democratically, without the arrogance that conceals weakness. Approaching people with a willingness to communicate. And approaching other women with a willingness to make them valuable, acknowledged, and visible.

Although the mass media have a huge impact on politics, their opinion is not final as citizens have their own thoughts and reconsider what they hear. It is our responsibility to construct political messages by betting on ethics, on conveying the truth, on analyzing and discussing knowledge with elements and data that may encourage one's own thinking.

We may think of keys to successful communication<sup>11</sup> to implement the *fempolitikit*:

**Change in Speech.** It is us women who are going to achieve the inclusion of the different population sectors through the use of speech. An inclusive language, a non-sexist language. Does this language end in saying "male and female so and so" / "brothers and sisters"? We do not need to be feminists to include women in our discourse and show how all issues affect them; we only need to be consistent with global population percentages. How many women are we? ¿Why cannot we become visible when speaking, when making stories and speeches? Why cannot we incorporate other traditionally discriminated populations sectors?

**Change in How Reality is Built** What are women's needs and interests? In addition to fighting against intrafamily and gender violence, advocating for sexual and reproductive rights, equality in the economy, education, and participation, we are interested in the environment, religion, politics, debates on strategic sectors, political and structural violence, wars. They are all our issues. And these challenges must be faced by the parliaments and the media.

<sup>9</sup> Ewen Stuart, *Las imágenes y el consumo*, Grijalbo, 1991, p. 303.

<sup>10</sup> Rincón Omar, publisher, *Los Tele-presidentes: cerca del pueblo, lejos de la democracia*, <http://www.c3fes.net/%28p%29publicacion7.htm>

<sup>11</sup> UNFPA Paraguay, *Manual sobre derechos sexuales y reproductivos para Radialistas del Paraguay*, Asunción, 2004, p. 96, 103, 104.





**Change in Discourse Quality.** Although I have said that we already think with our head and have something to say, women parliamentarians should self-analyze their discourse to verify it is a fact. Thinking critically is thinking with autonomy, says Barbero. Therefore, it is worthwhile recalling we should study permanently, review concepts, encourage

autonomous thinking, consistency, a direct relationship with citizens, and commitment to women. All these are key elements to addressing the citizen audience with a quality message and being entitled to speak, which constitutes the basis of actual political power. 📢

The Fem-Politi-Kit tool kit should include some tips or hints for improving our communication, for expressing ourselves better, either in a conversation, presentation, interview, or radio or TV show.

And as there are 10 tips, I will order them as a decalogue.

### First Commandment: START BY GOING STRAIGHT TO THE POINT

In ancient times, orators advised beginning speeches “*in media res*”. That is, into the middle of things, by plunging straight into action.

But, how do we usually start our speeches? Apologizing because we were asked to speak at the last minute, because we did not have time to prepare our speech. Or saying what we are going to say and will never get to say, and warning that if we do not say what we mean to say... That is, with useless talk.

The first minute is critical to the success or failure of the speech. People have an endless capacity to get distracted. So, we need to grab their attention from the start. You should begin telling a story, with a striking phrase, or something that seizes attention. If you win that very first moment, you are on the right track.

### Second Commandment: SPEAK, DON'T READ

The best thing is to have an outline of ideas and dare speak. It is usually boring and artificial to listen to someone reading, and



**José Ignacio López Vigil,**  
CUBAN COMMUNICATOR,  
WRITER, RADIALIST

### Hints for improving communication

- Has spent his life in booths and over a microphone.
- Training Coordinator at ALER.
- AMARC Regional Director.
- Current Coordinator of *Radialistas Apasionadas y Apasionados*, headquartered in Quito.
- Author of controversial series such as “Un tal Jesús”, “500 Engaños”, “Noticias de Última Ira”, and “Otro Dios es posible”.
- Has run courses and workshops on radio production in every country in the region.
- Author of several publications, among which stand out *Ciudadana Radio*, on mediation journalism, and *Manual Urgente para Radialistas Apasionados*, a key handbook for those interested in broadcasting with a community and public service vocation. In literature, it is worth noting “*Las mil y un historias de Radio Venceremos*”.

the audience switches off after the first page. People get bored. And boring people is the worst mistake a speaker can make.

If you would rather write down your whole speech (and not have just an outline), read it a couple of times before so that you can go about the content easily. This will help you forget about the written pages, look at your audience, and communicate better.

### Third Commandment: KEEP IT SIMPLE

We were made to believe that the more complex our language, the more expert we would sound. The more high-flown words we use, the more professional we are. And it is quite the opposite. When everybody can understand, then we show how cultivated we are. Because we do not speak to “show how much we know”, but to communicate with our audience.

Forget about abstract and pretentious words. A good woman parliamentarian is also a good teacher. In other words, her task is to make difficult things easy, and explain complex things in a simple way. (Sometimes, we do just the opposite and complicate simple things... to dazzle the fool. As I said the other day, “*since we are not profound, let’s at least be obscure*”).

### Fourth Commandment: USE PROVERBS, IMAGES, EXAMPLES...

If you want to communicate with your people, it is very useful to know and use popular sayings. Using a proverb in a timely manner is worth a hundred good points.

Do not be ashamed of using your people’s expressions. Some women seem to be asking permission to use a proverb (“*as it is commonly said*”). There is nothing common about using proverbs, comparisons, popular sayings, expressions that are typical of your region and country.

Of course, do not use those having a male chauvinist, homophobic, racist, or fatalist content.

### Fifth Commandment: USE HUMOUR

Using humour does not mean cracking a joke, let alone pretending to be funny. It is a matter of keeping a tone of good humour, happiness, and even mischief, when needed.

Make your presentations entertaining. Break away with that absurd precept that important things should be said in a grave and formal way. Laugh and make your audience laugh to create a relaxed atmosphere. In fact, we only remember those ideas that were said in an emotional manner. And humour is an inherent feeling to the human being.

Moreover, humour shows strength. A person who loses temper also loses the debate.

Laughter unlocks people. Fear paralyzes them. Remember Umberto Eco’s novel *The Name of the Rose*.

### Sixth Commandment: ARGUE, DON’T INSULT

My grandmother used to say that the person that insults has no arguments. The person that insults becomes politically demeaned.

In military logics, you conquer. In political logics, you convince. And this is a key difference in our work as women parliamentarians. Arguing means giving data and reasons that help understand a situation, an issue. By arguing you may bring people together. But if you insult, you always take them away.

Some individuals do not insult but repeat slogans as if people were stupid, as if the audience could be domesticated like Pavlov’s doggies. But people are smarter and wiser than what it sometimes seems.

### Seventh Commandment: BE ENTHUSIASTIC

Before going on stage, Greek directors used to ask their cast: Do you feel enthusiastic?... You do? Then, act and speak!

“Enthusiasm” is a nice word. It means “possessed by the gods”. In your case, by “the goddesses”. If you do not feel like speaking, if your eyes are not bright, if you do not feel a passion inside to communicate these ideas, you’d better shut up and leave it for next time.

Sound convinced, as if you really believe in what you are saying. There’s another nice word, “convinced”. It means “conquering together”. Not crushing the other, but sharing the victory.

### Eight Commandment: USE LAY, INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Spanish is a dreadfully patriarchal and masculinist language. We will therefore make an effort to visibilize both sexes, men and women. If we say “*niños*” (boys) we are not including “*niñas*” (girls). Because a *niña* (a girl) is not a *niño* (a boy). (What would happen if we always spoke of “women” and asked men to feel included by this term?).

In order to overcome this “linguistic machocracy”, we refer to male and female students, male and female workers, male and female peasants... What’s so difficult about it? We will use a bit more words... but we will visibilize the female half of the population.

As necessary as the inclusive language is the lay language. We live in secular states, we represent a plural society with different religious and non-religious options. A woman parliamentarian of a secular state cannot impose her convictions, not even in her discourse.

Keep your religious or non-religious beliefs to you and your family. There is no room for symbols or prayers or religious expressions in a secular state.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Mi friend Gina Godoy pointed out to the contradiction of asking for lay language through a “decatalogue”. In fact, the “ten commandments” of the Hebrew culture have become not so much a religious symbol but a way of ordering thinking (something like “the 10 most common mistakes”, “this week’s top 10 songs”, “the ten principles of economy”...). But if any of you prefers it, just change “commandments” for “tips”; that’s all.



#### Ninth Commandment: BE BRIEF.

We love going on and on, beating about the bush, repeating what we have already said, announcing what we are going to say, insisting on what has already been insisted on... Many men politicians (and also women politicians) suffer from verbal diarrhoea.

The Greek philosophers used to say “*less is more*”. So, learn how to say what you have to say without any introductions, epilogues, or repetitions. Conciseness is a virtue appreciated by all listeners. It is better to leave your audience hungry for words than overstuffed.

#### Ten Commandment: END WITH STYLE

Way too often, we do not know how to end a presentation or a speech. We say we have run short of time. We make excuses because we could not say what we wanted to say, but at least we said...we get entangled in useless ramblings.

End with an effective closing statement, with a perfect finale. For instance, I will now close by saying:

*Keep these 10 commandments in your Fem-Politic-Kit, stick to them... and you will see the results!* 🗣️

## Women in power: challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

GROUP OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS FIPA



### FINAL STATEMENT

**MEETING OF THE GROUP OF WOMEN  
PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS  
INTERPARLIAMENTARY FORUM OF THE AMERICAS (FIPA)**

**Considering:**

The Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA), formed by parliamentarians endowed with popular representation, committed to the interests of our peoples and, particularly, the rights of women:

- Recognize that the advances of women in the exercise of our rights and the achievement of greater and better opportunities for participation, are the result of our ongoing and systematic struggle, which we assert is still necessary to continued progress in eliminating discrimination, inequalities and all forms of violence;
- Recognize that the participation of women in most legislatures in the Americas has increased, although for the conquest of these spaces women still face social obstacles and exclusionary practices in formal politics;

- Recognize that, as women parliamentarians of the Americas, we represent greater ethnic, cultural and social diversity and, although having made some progress, there are still challenges to be met;
- Recognize that the presence of women in spaces of public power is essential to transform and consolidate democracies in the Americas;
- Recognize that we still have to influence politically the Public Agenda so that it incorporates women's proposals and demands.

For these foregoing reasons we agree to approve the following:

**QUITO DECLARATION OF THE GROUP OF WOMEN  
PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS**

The Group of Women Parliamentarians gathered in the city of Quito, the days 11 and 12 of August of 2010, commits to join efforts to accomplish:

- Strengthen Parliamentary actions and expand their impact, in order to make a sustained progress towards a real advance on women's rights.
- Work to ensure the introduction of a gender perspective in legislation and in all that the legislature does, in order to improve the status of women's rights and to eliminate all forms of exclusion.
- Promote constitutional reforms so that domestic legislation is consistent with international instruments on women's rights, such as the Belem do Pará Convention, CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women) and the Beijing Platform, to overcome inconsistencies in their application.
- Commit our parliaments to proposals in favour of women and substantive equality between men and women as the only way to promote social transformation.
- Empower women through the integration with other women parliamentarians and women's organizations, within and outside the country, to work together and to share experiences, knowledge and proposals.

VI. Legislate on the basis of the separation between church and state, and secular ethics as a principle for making laws and controlling actions, to the benefit of all women in their diversity and uniqueness.

VII. Demand that competent authorities ratify, adopt and implement international instruments concerning the rights of girls, (female) adolescents and women.

VIII. Create mechanisms for women to participate in a context of substantive progress toward the equality of women and men in the private sphere, so that household responsibilities are shared, and women have more time for greater participation and greater enjoyment of rights that are restricted by having to do double and triple duty.

IX. Share the legislative and supervisory work of parliaments with women's organizations and organized civil society, enabling accountability and genuine citizen participation.

X. Monitor public organizations in their compliance with the women's rights within the framework of their competences.

XI. Ensure equitable access for men and women to communication media, while eliminating sexist and discriminatory content through a committed approach to the full exercise of women's rights and their promotion and defence.

Given in the city of Quito, Republic of Ecuador, on August 12, 2010.

(The Declaration has been signed by those included in the list of participants)

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Country	Title	First name	Last name
Belize	Senator	Juliet	Thimbriel
Bolivia	Deputy	Marianela	Paco Durán
Brazil	Advisor	Angela	Santos Guimaraes
	Deputy Minister	Aluki	Rojas
Canada	M.P.	Bonnie	Crombie
	Senator	Céline	Hervieux - Payette
	M.P.	Denise	Savoie
Chile	Deputy	Clemira	Pacheco Rivas
	Deputy	Marcela	Sabat
Cuba	Deputy	Elsa	Rojas
Dominica	Senator	Tammy	Jean Jacques
	Assembly Member	Alejandra	Vicuña
Ecuador	Assembly Member	Aminta	Buenaño
	Assembly Member	Dora	Aguirre

Country	Title	First name	Last name
Ecuador	Assembly Member	Gina	Godoy
	Assembly Member	Gioconda	Salto
	Assembly Member	Guillermina	Cruz
	Assembly Member	Linda	Machuca
	Assembly Member	María Augusta	Calle
	Assembly Member	María Cristina	Kronfle
	Assembly Member	María Paula	Romo
	Assembly Member	María Soledad	Vela
	Assembly Member	Mariangel	Muñoz
	Assembly Member	Marisol	Peñañiel
	Assembly Member	Mauro	Andino
	Assembly Member	Nívea	Vélez
Ecuador	Assembly Member	Pamela	Falconí
	Assembly Member	Rosana	Alvarado
	Assembly Member	Sandra	Álvarez Monsalve

Country	Title	First name	Last name
	Deputy	Carmen	Calderón
El Salvador	Deputy	Mariella	Peña Pinto
	Deputy	Zoila	Quijada
	Deputy	Lilian	Donis
Guatemala	Deputy	Nineth	Montenegro
	Deputy	Otilia	Lux de Cotti
Honduras	Deputy	Gilliam	Guifarro
Mexico	Senator	Blanca	Díaz
	Deputy	Enoé	Uranga
	Senator	Ana	Mendoza de Acha
Paraguay	Deputy	Emilia	Alfaro
	Senadora	María Digna	Roa Rojas
Dominican Republic	Deputy	Gladys Sofía	Azcona
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	M.P.	Renée	Baptiste
Saint Lucia	M.P.	Rosemary	Mathurin









GENERAL MANUELA SAENZ (1797-1856) is the controversial and challenging Ecuadorian patriot whose picture illustrates the cover of these memoirs. Her relationship to Simón Bolívar and her many services to the fights for Independence in Ecuador, Colombia and Peru won her recognition as “the liberator of the Liberator”. One of the often forgotten causes to which she devoted her efforts is the rights of women, and she is also renowned for her firm, feminist stance. She died in exile, and almost complete neglected in Paita, Peru, during a diphtheria outbreak. She was buried in a common grave, but her campaign in Pichincha and Ayacucho has not been forgotten. The current Ecuadorian President declared her “Honorable General” on 22 May 2007, thus acknowledging a military rank already awarded to her in history books.

Sketch of Manuela Sáenz, by Oswaldo Guayasamín  
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