



## PRESS RELEASE

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**ParlAmericas, the National Assembly of Belize, and the Chamber of Senators of Bolivia hosted the 13th Gathering of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network For Gender Equality, *Bolstering Social Protection beyond COVID-19: What the Data Tells Us***

Today, ParlAmericas concluded its final virtual session of the 13th Gathering of its Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality (PNGE), titled *Bolstering Social Protection beyond COVID-19: What the Data Tells Us*, organized with the National Assembly of Belize and the Chamber of Senators of Bolivia. The gathering brought together parliamentarians from 21 countries in the Americas and the Caribbean, as well as parliamentary staff, specialists in the field, and representatives of civil society and youth organizations from across the hemisphere.

The keynote addresses that launched the Gathering's activities featured interviews on social protection between the Honourable Valerie Woods, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Belize, and co-host of the Gathering; and Ms. Isiuwa Iyahen, Programme Specialist for Economic Empowerment and Statistics at the UN Women Multi-Country Office for the Caribbean (available in [podcast](#) format, in English). In addition, Senator Yolanda Condo Ponce of Bolivia interviewed Dr. Roxana Mauricio, Regional Specialist on Labour Economics at the International Labour Organization (ILO) (available in [podcast](#) format, in Spanish).

The first session of the gathering, held on September 13, was organized as an [Inter-parliamentary Dialogue](#) with UN-system specialists on the benefits of inclusive social protection. In it, a panel moderated by Senator Natalie Campbell-Rodrigues (Jamaica) featured presentations by Dr. Carlos Maldonado, Social Affairs Officer from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); Dr. Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed, Gender and Development Research Manager from the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) Office of Research - Innocenti; and Claudia Brito Bruno, Policy Officer for Gender and Social Systems from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

On September 22, a [Parliamentary Dialogue with Civil Society and Youth Representatives](#) took place. Moderated by Senator Verónica Camino Farjat, Vice-President of the PNGE for North America, it provided an opportunity for exchange on the most pressing needs for pandemic response and sustainable recovery planning based on the emerging data and lived experiences during the pandemic.

The 13th Gathering concluded on October 4 with a [Plenary Session](#), which included a panel on parliamentary experiences in promoting inclusive social protection moderated by the Honourable Representative Jezmi Barraza Arraut. In addition, the Gathering's final [declaration](#) was adopted, and elections for all positions in the Executive Committee of the PNGE were held, with the following results:

- President - Senator Verónica Camino Farjat (Mexico)
- Vice-President, North America - The Honourable Mobina Jaffer, Senator (Canada)

- Vice-President, Central America - Member of the National Assembly Kayra Harding (Panama)
- Vice-President, South America - Honorable Representative Jezmi Barraza Arraut (Colombia)
- Vice-President, The Caribbean - Senator Natalie Campbell-Rodriques (Jamaica)

In reference to the theme of the 13th Gathering, Senator Andrónico Rodríguez, President of the Chamber of Senators (Bolivia), and co-host of the Gathering, stated that “when they are based on quality data, and an intersectional gender analysis is applied, social protection systems can contribute to addressing the structural causes of social and gender inequalities.”

In the words of The Honourable Valerie Woods, Speaker of the House of Representatives and co-host of the Gathering, “It will fall to all of us to take our learning and apply it in our legislative work to contribute to strengthening our national social protection systems based on the principles of human rights, non-discrimination, and universal access. As we know, this is made even more pressing by the ongoing COVID-19 context, its direct health impacts, and the ripples that have been felt - unequally - in the socioeconomic realm by our populations.”

For her part, Member of the Chamber of Deputies Maya Fernández Allende (Chile), outgoing President of the PNGE, noted that “We have discerned that broad, multisectorial collaboration is important for the proper governance and promotion of available social protection services, and further helps to prevent obstacles to accessing these services.”

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