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A GENDER PARITY HORIZON IN LATIN AMERICA: THE POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN*

55-2007

CONTENTS

SUMMARY

Parity, as an aspiration which is both possible and necessary for strengthening democracy, governance and the representation of social diversity in the countries of the region, is analysed in this study on the basis of gender equality in political representation and senior posts in public administration.

From a historical and comparative perspective, the study considers parity as an aspect of women's campaign for citizenship since the beginning of the modern era. It shows how processes which tend to give women the status of political subjects have gone hand in hand with the construction of modern citizenship. The various breakthroughs of the movement towards improved autonomy and equality have been achieved in historical contexts which provided the impetus for committed women to organize —women who were recognized as part of the process of democratic change in their societies. Those advances, however, were faced with opposition from social and political forces whose power was diminished by the changes, and which resisted progress by means of various forms of political discourse and practices.

This study looks at the cumulative successes achieved by women's campaigns. Those achievements are not permanent and do not result from linear processes; indeed, they are influenced by structural changes and by the correlation of political and ideological forces. It also draws attention to the particular characteristics of the campaigns which have enabled women gradually to achieve their various goals. It is hoped that the aspirations towards parity which are now shared by many women and men will be enriched by past campaigns and the conceptual frameworks which were developed, and this should help to analyse the conditions needed for parity to be achieved in the region. The document focuses on Latin America and takes account of the specificities of its historical, cultural and legal traditions.

INTRODUCTION

> *Experience shows that there is no key point after which the whole framework of inequality will collapse at once. Constant vigilance is needed in all situations: there are indeed "many beginnings" (Arendt) in the movement for social and political change. No one can afford to be careless.*

> Françoise Collin

The citizenship rights of women and their political representation in the current context make it possible to put forward parity as an attainable democratic goal. From a historical and sociological perspective, this document will construct a conceptual framework to describe the changes in women's citizenship and political representation across history and, in particular, to study from a broader viewpoint the changes which have occurred in women's participation in parliaments and in senior positions in the executive power since the 1990s.

This dual perspective, historical and sociological, identifies the causes of women's lack of power in today's societies and shows how campaigns for power and autonomy, coming from positions of exclusion, have led to democratization and modernization in today's institutions. Throughout, the study shows how processes which tend to give women the status of political subjects have gone hand in hand with the construction of modern citizenship by extending democratic principles to greater numbers of excluded groups and to sectors of society traditionally controlled by undemocratic structures.

The various breakthroughs achieved by women striving for improved autonomy and equality took place in historical contexts which provided the impetus for women to organize. Those advances, however, were faced with opposition from social and political forces whose power was diminished by the changes, and which resisted progress by means of various forms of political discourse and practices.

The document is made up of four sections. The first discusses women's campaigns for citizenship in the modern era. The second covers their fight for political representation and provides an in-depth analysis of the various philosophical, sociological and political dimensions of parity. The third section looks at women's drive to achieve citizenship in Latin America, from suffragism to the campaigns for electoral quotas to increase their parliamentary representation. Lastly, some preliminary conclusions are presented, supporting the idea of parity as an attainable and desirable goal in Latin America.

I. WOMEN'S CITIZENSHIP CAMPAIGNS IN THE MODERN ERA

The dawn of the modern era led to a radical change in thinking on individuals and society, affirming the autonomy of human beings and their capacity to make the rules that govern their lives. This led to a new historical paradigm based on the rational and coordinated organization of many aspects of social life and the establishment of social covenants. The ideas of freedom and of equality among persons were its philosophical premises, laying the foundation for campaigns in favour of universal rights and against privileges and particularism. Nonetheless, both ideals have been the subject of lasting tensions in modern societies: between individual and collective freedom, between freedom and justice, and between private and public interests.

The realization of those ideals and their incorporation into new institutional structures have been complex and contradictory processes, particularly for women. Despite the affirmation of equality for all persons and the right to decide upon their individual lives and the course to be taken by society, few people initially enjoyed those rights and for centuries the great majority were deprived of their exercise. In the specific case of women, the way in which modern citizenship was constructed meant that they were excluded from public spaces, prevented from affirming their autonomy and denied recognition as political subjects.

The construction of modern societies on the basis of the opposition between public and private and between production and reproduction, and the affirmation of a radical difference between the sexes, together with the division of labour, came into open conflict with the ideals of equality and independence and became the primary sources of the exclusion of women from citizenship in the modern world. To confine women to the domestic sphere was to deny their rationality and submit them to the authority and decisions of others in the private sphere. While issues dealt with in the public sphere were seen as the products of a social structure and rights-based matters which were the objects of guarantees of recognition, political negotiation, reconciling of interests and State mediation, matters which were part of the private sphere were considered "natural" and excluded from political debate. With neither citizenship nor access to formal education, women were marginalized in terms of rights and the ownership of goods.

Modern citizenship is invented in the act of creating public life, which is also the source of the first major criterion of exclusion from or inclusion in political life. The separation of the public and private spaces gave rise to the establishment of two types of power with different bases and rules: political power, which involves negotiation and consensus, and family or hierarchical power, based on the argument of efficiency and the natural order of decision-making power (Zincone, 1992).

II. WOMEN'S POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS AND CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS

> *Feminism has yet to lose any of the battles in which it has engaged. Although it may have been relatively slow in achieving its results, it has never wavered in its objectives.*

(Amelia Valcárcel, 2002)

The history of women's political campaigns relates to their access to the public sphere and the weakening of the border between the public and private fields. It is also the history of changes in power structures in the private sphere from a hierarchical model to one of political power.

Such campaigning contributes in various ways to defining citizenship rights, reveals the existence of unequal social relations which were previously hidden, extends rights to new social groups, defines new rights —both individual and collective— and enriches political campaigns taking place from positions of exclusion.

The first wave of feminist campaigns, which Amelia Valcárcel (2002) refers to as "enlightened feminism", began in the eighteenth century during the period of the Enlightenment. Enlightened feminism consisted of small groups of educated women who used the universal categories of philosophy in order to construct a critical discourse on equality and gender differences, "a discourse that no longer compared men and women or their respective differences or advantages but instead compared the situation of women being deprived of rights and property against the universal declarations themselves" (Valcárcel, 2002, p.7). Criticizing the inappropriateness of the new socio-political paradigm, and for the first time, feminism pointed out a serious flaw in enlightened democracy and formulated its demands in political terms by revealing how the masculine concept of citizenship and the definition of femininity led to an exclusive democracy.

The political, economic and social changes connected with what historians call the second industrial revolution, beginning in the 1870s, led to a clear acceleration of the feminist movement in the last third of the nineteenth century. The intensified and more prominent activities of feminism reflected the changes taking place in the more developed countries.

The right to vote, access to education and an end to double standards in sexual matters were the top goals of suffragism. The achievements already made by women's groups in the educational sphere were linked to their demands for political rights: it was hard to justify denying the right to vote to women who had reached the highest levels of education. Those active in the suffragist movement included successive generations of women in different countries, women who kept in contact with each other and who succeeded, one step at a time and after many years of campaigning, in obtaining the right to vote and access to education.

Suffragism questioned the representativeness of governments; since the protagonists were in a position of exclusion, they developed novel ways and methods of campaigning for civil rights. Fighting for equality before the law and achieving civil and political rights promoted the individuation of women, which in turn boosted empowerment processes.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, against the background of deep social changes and with the emergence of new liberation movements, a major movement known as third-wave feminism has arisen, mostly in Europe, the United States and Latin America. Unlike the movements of the past, which sought to remove formal obstacles to the presence and citizenship of women in public life through the exercise of the right to vote, access to education, and the enjoyment of women's rights as workers, the third wave questions the basis of the modern concepts of public and private and the dual concept of power underlying them (a central pillar of the modern institutional structure), as well as their divisions and interrelations. Employment, the family, rules relating to sexuality and reproduction, and the structures of political representation and of economic rights and civil liberties have been the targets of feminist thinking and criticism (Bonan, 2002). This new wave broadens the discussion of inclusion by extending rights into an area which had previously been considered as private and personal. "Personal" issues are beginning to be considered as the reflection of social dynamics, meaning that they cannot be excluded from the sphere of law and of political debate. One example of this is the recognition of the right to control one's body and the right to physical integrity, defined as new rights in the civil sphere.

A. WOMEN'S CAMPAIGNS FOR IMPROVED REPRESENTATION IN ELECTED POSITIONS AND IN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT

Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.

Platform for Action, Beijing, 1995

Seeking direct measures to increase women's political representation is a response to the slow, or almost nonexistent, growth of their presence in national parliaments, despite improvements in their educational levels, their entry to the labour market and their growing membership in political parties. Faced with this situation, women's organizations —especially groups of women in cross-party alliances— are demanding the implementation of affirmative-action mechanisms to overcome the formal or informal barriers which obstruct their nomination to electoral lists or to particular positions.

Electoral gender quotas, which were initially implemented at the party level in the Nordic countries beginning in the 1970s, were intended to ensure the presence of women in senior political positions and to create at least a "critical minority" (30% to 40%) to overcome the political isolation of women and to ensure that resources were channelled not only towards women's demands, but also for modifying the functioning of political systems.

Quota systems can be analysed from two viewpoints: the first refers to the source of the mandate (constitution, laws, political parties) and the second to the part of the process where the quota is applied. The latter may occur during the first part of the process (identification of would-be candidates), at the nomination stage or, lastly, by reserving a certain proportion of parliamentary seats for women. The double-quota concept relates to a system which not only calls for a certain percentage of women, but also ensures that they occupy particular positions on the electoral lists, ensuring that they can actually be elected.

The application of quotas is a matter of considerable debate and resistance in the political system, with some representatives arguing that it violates the principles of the universality of citizenship and of equal competition on the basis of individual merit. They point to the essentialist bias of the idea, and the danger of encouraging the creation of new groups and the corporate representation of group interests. These criticisms are dealt with in the section on the parity movement. It should, however, be pointed out that from the political strategy viewpoint, electoral quotas do not involve recognizing an essential identity of womanhood; they are a mechanism for overcoming subordination and improving women's chance of real equality. They are founded upon the concept of equity, which calls for different treatment of those who suffer inequality in order to bring about equality.

B. THE PARITY DEBATE

The parity movement emerged during the 1990s in a context of accelerating globalism and increasingly complex internal differences within various societies. The subject of citizenship and of the political representation of diversity becomes highly important when globalization processes are intensifying, and as nation States become relatively less powerful, new global institutions arise and continents are crossed by large waves of migration.

In that context, the parity movement questions unitary thinking and puts forward the need to construct institutions which represent social diversity and recognize new relationships between society and the State.

The campaign for parity in elected and appointed positions at senior levels of public administration was initiated in the late 1980s by women in the European political sphere, in response to the poor representation of women in parliaments —it was surprisingly low in France— and in positions of power in public administration. The concept of parity was proposed in 1989 by the Council of the European Communities. In November 1992, at the request of the Commission of the European Communities, the European summit "Women in Power" was held in Athens, bringing together current and former women ministers, who concluded that democracy requires parity in the representation and administration of nations.

Box 1
ATHENS DECLARATION, 1992

We, the undersigned, women with experience of high political office, gathered in Athens on 3 November 1992 at the invitation of the Commission of the European Communities for the first European Summit "Women in Power" have together adopted the following Declaration.
We note a democratic deficit
We note that the current position of women in the Member States of the European Communities as in other European countries is still characterised by profound inequality in all public and political decision-making authorities and bodies at every level -local, regional, national and European.
We note with concern that women's participation in political decision-making has not improved in a number of European countries since the mid-seventies and that recent political developments have resulted in a significant decrease in the proportion of women in decision-making, particularly in the legislative assemblies in some of these countries.

Box 1 (concluded)

We conclude that women's access to the same formal rights as men, such as the right to vote, stand for election and apply for senior posts in public administration, has not produced equality in practice. We therefore deplore the lack of strategic policies to give practical reality to the principles of democracy.

We proclaim the need to achieve a balanced distribution of public and political power between women and men

A democratic system should entail equal participation in public and political life by its citizens.

We demand equality of participation by women and men in public and political decision-making.

We underline the need for changes to the structure of decision-making procedures in order to ensure such equality in practice.

We uphold the following principles and arguments

Formal and informal equality between women and men is a fundamental human right. Women represent more than half the population. Equality requires parity in the representation and administration of Nations.

Women represent half the potential talent and skills of humanity and their under-representation in decision-making is a loss for society as a whole.

The under-representation of women in decision-making prevents full account being taken of the interests and needs of the population as a whole.

A balanced participation by women and men in decision-making would produce different ideas, values and styles of behaviour suited to a fairer and more balanced world for all, both women and men.

We call upon all members of society concerned

We call upon the Commission of the European Communities and all European and international organisation to adopt action programmes and measures to ensure the full participation of women in decision-making in these organisations.

We call upon the Member States of the European Communities and other European States to integrate fully the dimension of equal opportunities for women and men in their educational system and in all their national policies, and to adopt the measure necessary to implement these objectives, in order to achieve equal sharing of decision-making posts for women and men.

We call upon all the political leadership at European and national level to accept the full consequences of the democratic idea on which their parties are built, in particular by ensuring balanced participation between women and men in positions of power, particularly political and administrative positions, through measures to raise awareness and through mechanisms.

We call upon the leaders of trade unions, workers' organisations and adequate employers' associations at national and European level to recognise the increasing contribution of women to the labour market by ensuring the mechanisms necessary for equal participation by women at all levels of these organisations, including decision-making bodies.

We call upon women's organisations at national and European level to continue their efforts to further women in the exercise of their full rights as citizens by awareness-raising campaigns, training programmes and any other appropriate measures.

We call upon those working in the media to present non stereo-typed images of women and men and to inform public opinion of the need for balanced participation in decision-making by women and men and to defend the principles on which this balance is based.

We call upon the women and men of all the countries of Europe to recognise the need to implement a balance between women and men and to accept the consequences of it in order to contribute to building a meaningful and lasting democracy.

We undertake a campaign to strengthen european democracy

We affirm the need at this time of profound change and hope for Europe to implement the changes in attitudes and structure which are indispensable to achieving a proper balance between women and men at decision-making levels.

These essential changes should accompany contemporary developments in European society developments which will be all the more welcome if women are as equally involved in them as men.

By signing this declaration we hereby launch a campaign to mobilise all concerned in society to ensure balanced participation of women and men in decision-making at local, regional and national level and in the European Institutions including the next European Parliament.

Source: Athens Declaration [online] http://www.eurit.it/.

The parity movement includes feminists from the political sphere who adhere to differing theoretical, ideological and political movements. For more than a decade, through seminars, articles, petitions and lobbying, they have been seeking to convince public opinion of the democratic deficit represented by the absence of women, half of humanity, from decision-making circles.

The campaign for parity includes two strands of thinking: the French tradition, which builds its argument upon universalism, citizenship, equality and difference, and that of the Americas, which concentrates on positive actions to counter the exclusion of various groups from the exercise of power.

The French side argues that women are not a population group, but half of humanity. The duality of gender is therefore a universal difference, not one of category, and the need for mixed representation (*mixité)* does not conflict with the principle of equality, but in fact represents its necessary translation into fact. From this perspective, there must be a space in politics for gender differences, which are cross-cutting and intrinsic to humanity.

The philosopher Sylviane Agacinski (1999) sees parity as a new concept of gender differences and a new approach to democracy. The demand for parity refutes so-called neutrality and recognizes gender differences without recognizing any hierarchical difference, stating that public responsibilities belong equally to men and women. To be a woman is one of the ways of being human. She considers that, although women are not essentially different from men, they are a distinct social and cultural group owing to their traditional exclusion from power. Consequently, as women, they need to be brought into politics deliberately. The people are more exactly represented when parity is accepted.

One criticism of parity made by men and women in politics is that it would contravene the principle of universality, the very foundation of modernity and democracy. The Belgian feminist philosopher Françoise Collin responds that supporting parity does not mean adopting a philosophical position (Collin, 2006). The concept of universality refers to human beings, but that of parity is a matter of citizenship. The category of citizenship is more restrictive than that of humanity, since the former always exists in the framework of a particular State and its legal system and therefore cannot be universalistic. Citizenship has external limits in the form of frontiers, and internal limits which reflect systems of inclusion and exclusion. Women demand their rights —in this case, the right to be elected representatives— as citizens and as members of one of the two communities which make up and reproduce humanity. Parity is therefore a demand in the area of citizenship and not a philosophical position relating to the ultimate status of humans and their sex.

Parity reveals that which has been concealed beneath the concept of the individual, a concept which had been constructed in the image and likeness of man as the referent. The demand for parity, by calling into question the monism of democratic universalism, recognizes multiple ways of being an individual, of embodying that which is universal and the world common to all. In this way, parity desexualizes power by extending it to both genders and, therefore, represents true universalism (Collin, 2006). To the extent that individual citizenship is not neuter and is constructed on a masculine model, access to representation as a human being and an individual takes place in a sex-specific scenario characterized by the exclusion —structural rather than accidental— of women.

Feminist movements which affirm substantive equality between men and women, and those which emphasize difference, support parity on the basis of different arguments. For the "universalists" there is a blatant contradiction between the law, which states that all citizens must be represented regardless of their sex, and reality, in which both male and female citizens are represented almost entirely by men, reflecting profound discrimination. Achieving equality requires abolishing artificial differences

between the sexes, differences which would cease to exist if inequality were to be overcome. This school of thought considers that parity representation would not mean that women were the representatives only of women; both women and men would represent the people as a whole on an equal basis and would take care of the public good in all its forms. Parity only requires that the makeup of assemblies, of parliaments, should reflect the basically mixed nature of humanity. Despite these affirmations, their arguments in favour of parity are based on valuing the differences between men and women. They also state that women are more likely than men to bring about real gender equality, and that they show much greater commitment to pushing forward processes that would lead to real equality.

Feminists who emphasize difference affirm the heterogeneity of men and women within a single world; difference will outlive inequality. The presence of women among the leadership of parties or communities brings about changes because the women's contribution is different to that of men owing to the shared experience of exclusion, which is expressed in antipatriarchal reflexes and habits, opposing the masculine approach to politics. Recognition of the difference between the two groups and their diversity of interests has made possible the discussion of specific rights and the recognition that there are different target populations, but there is still a risk that publicly recognized differences might become stabilized and be considered immutable. Those who take a historical perspective can adopt the viewpoints of other people who have inherited different historical approaches and heritages.

In the political sphere, the reservations that feminists have in relation to parity are based on scepticism as to whether the entry of women can of itself achieve the goal of desexualizing power in a system which has been strongly structured around men only, particularly if they do not understand gender inequalities and have not agreed in advance on shared goals in terms of changing the system. They argue that women representatives are unlikely to have, solely on the basis of their condition as women, sufficient clarity and strength of will to be able to protect the interests of marginalized women. They also wonder where the real mechanisms of power are to be found in modern-day society. This issue is increasingly significant in the context of globalization, where other sources of power have emerged that transcend nation States in the areas of economics and politics, that are occupied mainly by men, and that can bring pressure to bear on nation States.

At the same time, they wonder whether feminism and the presence of women in positions of power are able to represent women as a whole. Like the advocates of parity, they draw attention to the danger of the erroneous belief in the homogeneity of women and the ability of feminism to represent all women. Feminism can never represent all of them, or all of their characteristics. Beyond the general fact of the oppression of women, it must be admitted that the situation of women, taken in the singular, is a fiction and that the situations of women in society are varied. Feminist campaigns in themselves have brought about increased diversity among women, since the goal of their collective struggles has been to give them the status of subjects and liberate them from domination by others.

From this viewpoint, the demand for parity is one of the motors of the revival of democracy and gender equality, coexisting with other campaigns launched by civil society, public opinion and the State. Parity in political representation has generally gone hand in hand with strategies to create the conditions for parity participation of women in all spheres of society, both private and public. Equality demands social agreements to enable all adult members of society to interact as equals, and this entails equitable distribution of material resources and recognition of independence and of the different voices making up society.

III. WOMEN'S CAMPAIGN FOR POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN LATIN AMERICA

The campaigning of Latin American women for citizenship and political representation has had specific features resulting from the economic, social and institutional characteristics of the countries and their position on the world stage at various times in their history. Although women's movements in the region have been inspired by various feminist groups in Europe and the United States, their strategy and the direction of their campaigning have been different. The feminist movement in the region has combined the fight for emancipation with the goals of democracy, respect for human rights, social equality and combating poverty. Alliances of working-class and middle-class women added up to a powerful movement which helped to give strength and legitimacy to feminist movements. The cultural diversity of the countries of the region has made it necessary to recognize various types of gender relations, corresponding to the diversity of cultural traditions and ethnic groups within a given society. The feminist movement has had to pay attention to the ways in which the various systems of inequality are interconnected and structured, and to the contradictions between the desire for gender equity and for social equity, or between ethnic and gender equity. Cultural globalization has now enabled the region's feminist movement to be in contact with feminist movements in other developing countries with different cultural traditions, including India, the Philippines and certain Arab countries, thereby broadening its frames of reference.

Latin America has seen campaigns for citizenship for women since the late nineteenth century. The most important landmarks include the suffragist movement, as well as the third wave of feminism which emerged in the 1980s. The organization of the feminist movement has been boosted at various times by processes of building or restoration of democracy, the signing of peace agreements, and modernization in various countries. On each such occasion, feminism emerged as a political force, with organizations, connections, lines of argument, communications media and its own demands.

Although in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries women were only a minority in the public sphere and were concentrated in religious and charitable organizations, it is possible to identify a few groups which were campaigning for equality at that time. In the early twentieth century, a few women entered revolutionary political parties and were involved in democracy movements which were opposing dictatorships, as in the case of the Costa Rican Women's Alliance against the dictatorship of Federico Tinoco in 1920. In the late nineteenth century in El Salvador, the Adela Barrios feminist club was formed, calling for the right for women to vote, and in the 1920s it took part in the fight by reformist and revolutionary movements against the regime of Meléndez Quiñones. In 1922, 6,000 women marched in black as a sign of mourning for the death of democracy and in support of the presidential candidate Tomás Molina. The membership of these movements was made up of women teachers, whose political activity led to the creation of organizations and clubs and the publication of periodicals. In this way, they opened up separate political spaces from which they could explain their situation of exclusion and demand to be recognized as subjects. Their leaders were exceptional women, who shared a great political will to combat the subordination of women in the family, in employment and in education. One such leader was Prudencia Ayala, a Salvadorean of indigenous origin, who in the early twentieth century wrote in local periodicals in favour of Central American unity, in support of Augusto César Sandino in Nicaragua and against the political regimes of the Central American countries. In 1930 she advocated the right to vote for women before the municipal council of San Salvador and the Supreme Court, and she demanded to be registered as a candidate for the presidential election. She also set up the Círculo Femenino Tecleño and the periodical *Redención femenina*.

The suffragist movement took on an international character from the outset. Connections between the various countries and movements involved ensured the sharing of new ideas, discourses and arguments, which simultaneously demanded the right to vote for women in a number of countries. The movement's campaigns can be illustrated by the case of Mexico, an example of the gradual nature of the achievements gained and the strategies adopted, including the use of legal loopholes and of alliances with other political actors.

Box 2
LANDMARKS OF THE MEXICAN SUFFRAGIST MOVEMENT

1910   The feminist periodical *Violetas del Anáhuac*, founded and run by Laureana Wright González and written by women only, puts forward the demand for women's suffrage and equal opportunities between men and women.
The *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* anti-re-election women's club and a number of women's associations join Francisco Madero's protest against electoral fraud, and demand the right for women to be involved in politics. Creation of the *Pro Derechos de la Mujer* organization.

1916   The First Feminist Congress calls for women's suffrage. Supported by the Governor of Yucatán, the Congress was organized by Consuelo Zavala, Dominga Canto, Adolfina Valencia de Ávila, María Luisa Flota, Beatriz Peniche, Amalia Gómez, Piedad Carrillo Gil, Isolina Pérez Castillo, Elena Osorio, Fidelia González, Candelaria Villanueva, Lucrecia and Adriana Badillo, Rosina Magaña and Consuelo Andrade.

1917   Following the adoption of the Constitution of 1917, the Family Relations Act is promulgated, stating that men and women are entitled to consider themselves as equals within the home.
Hermila Galindo announces that she will stand for election as the Deputy for the fifth district of Mexico City, on the grounds that the 1917 Constitution does not expressly deny citizenship to women, nor the right to vote or to be elected.

1922   Feminist Leagues are set up in the state of Yucatán, under the government of Felipe Carrillo Puerto (1922-1924).

1923   In Yucatán, Elvia Carrillo Puerto, Beatriz Peniche de Ponce and Raquel Dzib Cicero stand as candidates for election as Deputies to the state congress. Elvia Carrillo Puerto becomes the first Mexican woman Deputy, having been elected to the state congress by the fifth district on 18 November 1923.
The Mexican Section of the Pan-American Women's League convenes the first National Feminist Congress in Mexico City, attended by 100 women delegates. The congress's demands include: civil equality, so that women are eligible for administrative positions; a decree on political equality; and parliamentary representation. The governor of the state of San Luís Potosí, Aurelio Manrique, responds to the demands by issuing a decree giving the women of the state the right to vote and to be elected in municipal elections.

1925   The legislature of the state of Chiapas gives women aged 18 and over the same political rights as men, throughout the territory of the state.

1928   The new Civil Code provides that "women shall not, by reason of their sex, be subject to any restriction on the acquisition and exercise of their rights," and that on reaching the age of majority they have the right to dispose of their person and property and the capacity to conclude contracts of all kinds.

1929   New women's associations come into being, with the main goal of achieving full political rights: the Revolutionary Feminist Party and the National Revolutionary Women's Bloc.

1934   During the presidential campaign of General Lázaro Cárdenas, the Mexican Women's Front is founded.

1935   For the first time, women participate in internal voting in the National Revolutionary Party (PNR).

Source: National Women's Institute (INMUJERES), *49º aniversario del sufragio femenino en México - Cronología*, Mexico City, 2002 [online] http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2002/11/04/articulos/51_sufragio49.htm.

The movement was especially active in social contexts where the cultural and political conditions were favourable, and from there it expanded to other areas. Its discourse gradually became more distinctive, starting from within broader democratic movements, and then taking on an autonomous and

emancipatory character which makes it into a political force. Initially, arguments in favour of education and the right to vote and to work were based on existing gender role divisions. The suffragists argued that if women were better educated and were involved in public life and the labour market, they would be better equipped to fulfil their social roles as mothers and wives. Their discourse later took on a more emancipatory character, opposing the exclusion of women by means of the democratic ideals of equality and justice. Progress was gradual, and the social and political world responded to each step forward with huge ideological resistance and, not infrequently, threats to the physical integrity of the leaders, in an attempt to force them to give up their aspirations and achievements.

Table 1
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (34 COUNTRIES): CHRONOLOGY OF THE RECOGNITION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS TO VOTE AND TO STAND FOR ELECTION

1924	Saint Lucia
1929	Ecuador [a]
1931	Chile [a]
1932	Uruguay, Brazil
1934	Cuba
1938	Bolivia [a]
1939	El Salvador (voting only)
1941	Panama [a]
1942	Dominican Republic
1945	Guyana (to stand for election)
1946	Guatemala, Panama,[b] Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela
1947	Argentina, Mexico (voting only)
1948	Suriname
1949	Chile,[b] Costa Rica
1950	Barbados, Haiti
1951	Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
1952	Bolivia [b]
1953	Mexico (standing for election)
1954	Belize, Colombia
1955	Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru
1961	Bahamas,[a] El Salvador (standing for election), Paraguay
1964	Bahamas [b]

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, Women in Politics [online] http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/suffrage.htm [date of reference: 14 September 2006].

[a]   Right subject to conditions or restrictions.
[b]   Restrictions or conditions lifted.

Beginning in the 1940s, as a result of modernization processes in the countries and the achievements made in education and political life, some women (although they were still in the minority) began to be considered for senior posts in public administration. This change began slowly, but has gathered speed in recent decades. Studies by Eglé Iturbe de Blanco (2003) show that, between the 1940s and the 1960s, women ministers were appointed for the first time in the following countries: Ecuador (1944), Panama (1950), Chile (1952), Cuba (1952), Venezuela (1953), Colombia (1954) and Costa Rica (1958). In Bolivia, Lidia Gueiler Tejada became President in 1979 by constitutional succession.

A. WOMEN'S STRUGGLE FOR POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

Spurred on by the political democratization processes of the last two decades of the twentieth century, the men and women of Latin America recovered the right to elect their representatives and stand for election. In Central America, peace agreements paved the way for the creation of new institutions to support consensuses. In the region as a whole, countries came under pressure to reform their institutions in a context of increasing globalization and new economic models.

The women's movement, including feminists, played a fundamental role in democratic recovery and peace-building processes in the wake of armed conflicts. The relationships established among the various strands (human rights groups, survivors' groups in conflict zones and feminist organizations) raised the profile of the movement and ensured it was recognized as part of the anti-dictatorial and progressive forces committed to peace and democracy.

In many countries, a new collective subjectivity was built around gender inequalities, and new political groups emerged. Those groups drew attention to the systemic nature of gender inequality and identified differing and often contradictory forms of discrimination within the social and institutional spheres, in areas such as day-to-day interaction, family life, the marketplace, politics and culture. Unlike the feminist movement in Europe and the United States, feminist demands in this region were based around development, social equality and poverty.

The fact that democratic governments were now commonplace in the region meant that society was faced with a complex combination of institutional weakness and citizens who were increasingly aware of their rights. Although democratic forces agreed on the importance of periodic competitive elections to choose political leaders and on the rejection of authoritarianism in all its forms, they also agreed that there was an urgent need to improve the quality of democracy by overcoming major social inequalities and generating more effective citizen participation mechanisms to involve the population in public affairs (ninth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean).

The main criticism levelled by feminism was the ongoing exclusion of women. At the beginning of the 1990s, women's access to decision-making and representative bodies was very limited. In parliaments, women accounted for about 5% of the members of upper chambers and about 9% in lower chambers (Bareiro and others, 2004). This was a clear indication that there were still structural barriers to more egalitarian participation in the exercise of political power.

The feminist movement uses a complex strategy for accessing elected and decision-making positions, proposing the adoption of affirmative action, while also using civil action to institutionalize existing achievements. Affirmative action is linked to training programmes for social and political leaders and the promotion of women's associations. In a political field based around gender equity, gender problems are defined and incorporated into government agendas; legal and constitutional reforms are promoted; relevant State knowledge is increased; appropriate human-resources training is provided; and support is given for the establishment of bodies to coordinate gender-equity policies. The world conferences organized by the United Nations during the 1990s played an essential role and became major media events that had a huge effect on public opinion and therefore went a long way towards disseminating and legitimizing issues, proposals and the resulting agreements. The growing involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in preparatory meetings for conferences, national committees and delegations, alternative forums and follow-up committees and conferences provided the feminist movement with new opportunities for political participation at the global level, as well as ways to

influence governments. The agreements adopted at the conferences have become genuine global agendas guiding the political actions of those committed to gender equity in the countries concerned.

In the 1990s, against the backdrop of an international climate favourable to increased gender equity, the countries of the region became the setting for a series of demands and negotiations for the adoption of quotas for elections to legislative posts. Although each country adopted its own quota laws, it was always the culmination of a long process. Women in politics formed all-party groups and, with the support of the feminist movement and women's organizations, campaigned for the adoption of quota laws, the identification of the main shortcomings, the reform of rules and the establishment of sanctions to ensure proper compliance. The existence of State-sponsored gender mechanisms provided a link between the various strands of the movement and the State in their shared cause. In all cases, women in politics tended to have strained relations with their respective parties. Political parties put up resistance to introducing affirmative action as a way of promoting political participation by women, but eventually cooperated when the debate on equity became a regionwide issue (see table A-2 of the annex).

In 1991 Argentina became the first country to enact a women's quota law, in response to the demands of female politicians who proposed the measure after the main parties refused to establish quotas within their ranks. In 1989, the female senator for the province of Mendoza submitted an electoral code reform bill that would force party-political organizations to include women in their lists of candidates for legislative posts. In 1990, 15 party organizations joined a Political Feminists' Network, which played a major part in analysing and adopting the quota law. The fifth National Women's Meeting (1990), which brought together a wide range of activists, expressed its support for the quota law through letters sent to the presidents of all political parties and to both chambers of parliament for the approval of the quota bills presented. Other fundamental factors included the support of both the Multisectoral Women's Group (made up of feminists, members of political parties and civil-society representatives) and the National Women's Council (Marx, Borner and Caminotti, 2006). President Menem adopted the demand for affirmative action as part of his national modernization policy.

The first elections held following the enactment of the quota law demonstrated the need for amendments to be made and for strict monitoring to close the loopholes that parties could use to get round the legislation. Legal proceedings brought by female politicians concerning parties' failure to comply with the law constituted an important means of pressuring them to implement it. Also, the constitutional reform of 1994 provided political and legal backing to the demands by recognizing that there should be equality among men and women in terms of access to elective posts and political positions, and by making it unconstitutional for any future law to reduce the quotas.

The following is a summary of the milestones and complexity of the campaign for the women's quota law in Argentina.

In Costa Rica a quota proposal was put forward in around 1988, when a bill was presented to promote the social equality of women by forcing parties to include mechanisms to promote and guarantee the effective participation of women in the allocation of posts within parties and in nominations for electoral lists. Although in 1992 an amendment to the Electoral Code established a system of minimum quotas, a year later the amendment was overturned by the Supreme Court of Elections, which declared it unconstitutional. In 1995, the National Centre for the Development of Women and the Family joined the campaign for quotas, in conjunction with female politicians from the country's two main political parties, the National Liberation Party (PLN) and the Social Christian Union Party (PUSC). The quota system was finally established by Act no. 7635 in 1996. Parties now have to ensure female participation of 40% in their structures, their delegations at all levels and their electoral lists. In 1998, the electoral authorities

failed to reject lists that did not comply with the quota law, so in 1999, the Supreme Court of Elections ruled that the law should be interpreted as follows: lists should have at least 40% of either sex, and women must occupy 40% of seats up for election, the number of which is dictated by the parties' previous election results.

Box 3

LANDMARKS OF THE WOMEN'S QUOTA LAW IN ARGENTINA

1989   Presentation of two bills to reform the National Electoral Code.

1990   Creation of the Political Feminists' Network.

1991   Approval of Act no. 24.012, which stated that lists presented must have a minimum of 30% female candidates for elective posts and in proportions that make it possible for them to be elected. No list failing to comply with these requirements would be approved.

1993   Enactment of decree 379/93 containing the implementing regulations. The 30% quota was to be considered as a minimum and lists must include one woman for every two men.
Parties interpret the law in their favour, by considering that the probability of being elected refers to seats up for election in a province rather than in the party.
Despite pressure from their parties, female candidates bring their case before the National Electoral Chamber, which finds in their favour.

1994   Reform of the Constitution to include article 37 on equality between men and women.
The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights allows the complaint of María Merciadri de Moroni (a member of the Radical Civic Union) on the violation (by the Republic of Argentina) of political rights and rights to due process, equality in the face of the law and effective remedy.

1995   The National Electoral Chamber recognizes the legal right of the National Women's Council to bring legal proceedings on behalf of female candidates.

1999   Quota laws in force in 22 of the 24 provinces.

2001   By virtue of regulatory decree 1246, electoral quotas apply to all elective posts of deputies, senators and members of a constituent assembly. The 30% quota for women is a minimum, and is considered to be fulfilled only if it applies to the number of positions that each party organization wins in each election. The decree also establishes sanctions.

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of J. Marx, J. Borner and M. Caminotti, "Cuotas de género y acceso femenino al Parlamento: los casos de Argentina y Brasil en perspectiva comparada", Política, vol. 46, Santiago, Chile, University of Chile, 2006.

In Mexico, in 1993, an amendment was made to paragraph 3 of article 175 of the Federal Code of Electoral Institutions and Procedures (COPIFE), stating that parties must promote the increased participation of women in politics. In 1996, it was agreed that the statutes of national political parties should stipulate that there will be no more than 70% of candidates of the same sex for candidacies as members of parliament and senators. In 2002, clauses (a), (b) and (c) of article 175 were approved as follows: there shall be no more than 70% of candidates of the same sex; in each of the three first segments of every list, there will be a candidate of a different sex, and if a political party or coalition fails to comply with what has been laid down by the Federal Council of the Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico, it will be given 48 hours to rectify the situation, after which time it will be publicly reprimanded. Repeated non-compliance will result in a refusal to register the candidacies in question. This does not include candidacies of relative majority resulting from an election process involving direct voting (Reynoso and D'Angelo, 2004).

In Brazil, in 1996 following the Campaign "Women Unafraid of Power" (*Mulheres sem medo do poder*), a quota of 20% was set for lists of municipal elections. The following year, an amendment to the electoral law raised the minimum quota of female candidates in a list to 25%. In Bolivia, the quota law was introduced in 1997, and establishes that there shall be 30% of female candidates in the lists for the lower chamber and 25% for the senate. It also states that the quota should be gradually increased until it reaches 50%. Following a decade of struggle, 13 countries in the region have approved quota laws (see table 2).

Table 2
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (13 COUNTRIES): TIMELINE OF ENACTMENT OF QUOTA LAWS AND SUBSEQUENT AMENDMENTS

Country	Year in which quota law was approved	Amendments
Argentina	1991	1993
Bolivia	1997	2001
Brazil	1997	
Colombia	1999	2001 - Declared unconstitutional
Costa Rica	1996	1999
Ecuador	1997	2000
Honduras	2000	
Mexico	1996	2002
Panama	1997	
Paraguay	1996	
Peru	1997	2001
Dominican Republic	1997	2000
Venezuela (Bol. Rep. of)	1997	2000 - Declared unconstitutional

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), "Global Database of Quotas for Women" [online] http://www.quotaproject.org/ [date of reference: 16 August 2006].

The effects have been positive in all countries with quota laws, as female representation has increased, especially in the lower chambers and single chambers (see figure 1). However, in most countries female representation remains below the percentage stipulated by law.

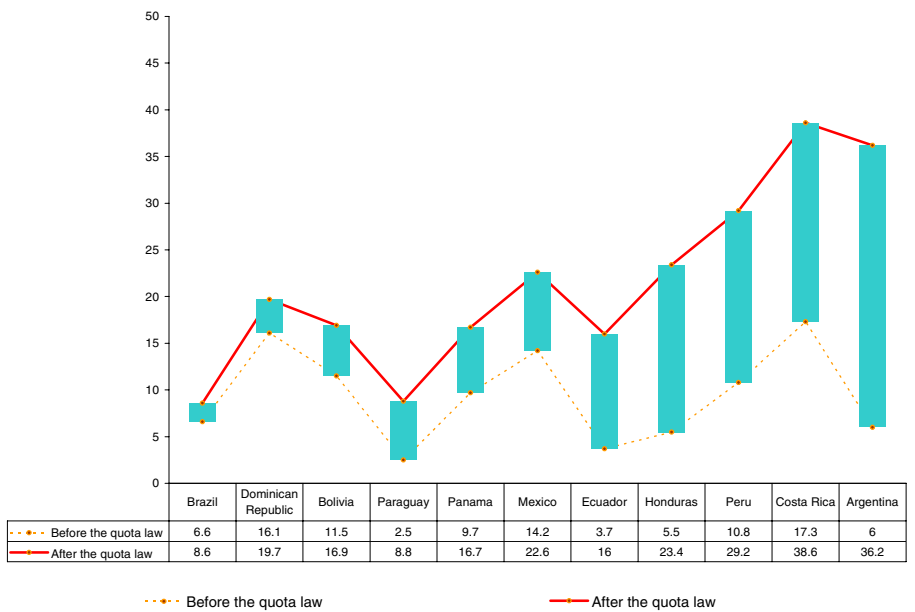The differences between the results prior to quota laws and the latest election results are even more impressive, especially in the case of the following countries: Argentina, with female representation increasing from 6% to 36.2%; Costa Rica (from 17.3% to 38.6%); Honduras (from 5.5% to 23.4%); Peru, (from 10.8% to 29.2%); Mexico (from 14.2% to 22.6%); and Ecuador (from 3.7% to 16%) (see figure 2).

Figure 1
LATIN AMERICA (10 COUNTRIES): RESULTS OF THE QUOTA SYSTEM
(Percentages)
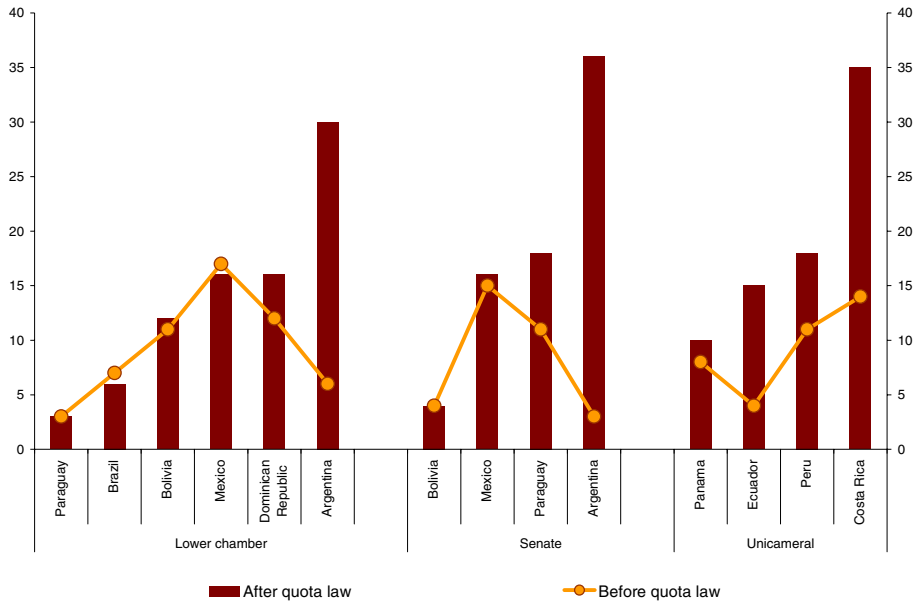
| After quota law | Before quota law |

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments" [online] http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world-arc.htm [date of reference: 16 August 2006].

Figure 2
LATIN AMERICA (11 COUNTRIES): DIFFERENCES IN FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT (LOWER OR SINGLE CHAMBERS) BETWEEN THE ELECTIONS PRIOR TO QUOTA LAWS AND THE MOST RECENT ELECTIONS
(Percentage points)

	Brazil	Dominican Republic	Bolivia	Paraguay	Panama	Mexico	Ecuador	Honduras	Peru	Costa Rica	Argentina
Before the quota law	6.6	16.1	11.5	2.5	9.7	14.2	3.7	5.5	10.8	17.3	6
After the quota law	8.6	19.7	16.9	8.8	16.7	22.6	16	23.4	29.2	38.6	36.2

| Before the quota law | After the quota law |

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments" [online] http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world-arc.htm [date of reference: 16 August 2006].

Countries in which female representation exceeded 30% in the most recent elections display a pattern of systematic and upward growth, especially Argentina, Costa Rica and Peru. Women now form a critical mass that reinforces the achievements made to date and provides a platform for advancing towards parity (see figure 3).

Figure 3 also shows that countries with female representation of no more than 20% have a slower and more erratic growth rate. Lastly, there has been hardly any increase in Brazil and Paraguay.

Figure 3
LATIN AMERICA (11 COUNTRIES): INCREASED PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT (LOWER OR SINGLE CHAMBERS), ACCORDING TO THE EFFECT OF THE QUOTA LAW
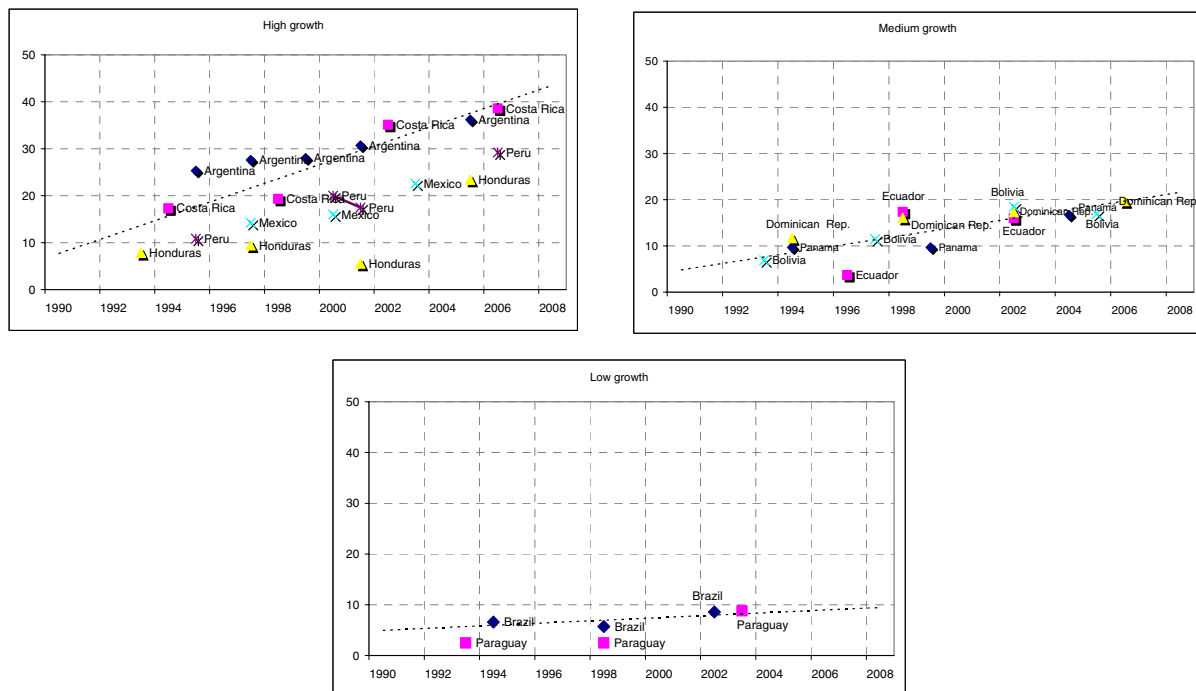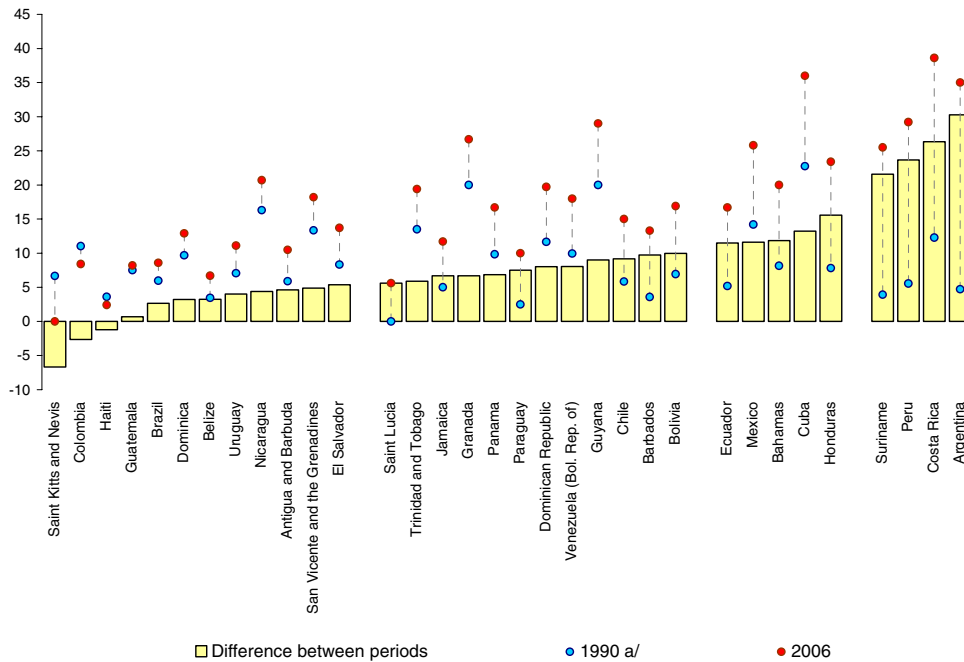*(Percentages)*

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments" [online] http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world-arc.htm [date of reference: 10 December 2006].

Brazil is an interesting case, as there was no significant increase in female participation, despite the fact that conditions appeared conducive to the adoption of a successful quota law: a strong feminist movement, a large group of women lobbying for the adoption the 1988 Constitution, the coordinating role played by the First National Women's Council and the early adoption of a 30% quota by the Workers' Party for either sex in its governing bodies. The lack of increase is attributable to political factors and the characteristics of the electoral system. According to some studies, promoting a greater female presence in the legislative power by means of affirmative action was not one of the main concerns of women politicians in Brazil (Miguel, 2002; Marx, Borner and Caminotti, 2006). Furthermore, the electoral system is frankly unfavourable, as any 30% quota loses significance because parties may nominate 50% more candidates than the existing number of seats. Also, there are no sanctions for failure to comply with quotas.

Countries with quota laws have better results than those without such laws (see figure 4), especially in terms of legislative power in Argentina, Costa Rica, Honduras and Peru.

Figure 4
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (33 COUNTRIES): WOMEN'S PRESENCE IN LEGISLATIVE POWER (LOWER AND SINGLE CHAMBERS)

□ Difference between periods   ● 1990 a/   ● 2006

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments" [online] http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world-arc.htm [date of reference: 10 December 2006].

[a] Elections: Argentina (1989), Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (1988), Bolivia, (1989), Brazil (1990), Chile (1989), Colombia (1994), Costa Rica (1990), Dominican Republic (1994), Ecuador (1992), El Salvador (1991), Guatemala (1994), Honduras (1993), Mexico (1994), Nicaragua (1990), Panama (1994), Paraguay (1993), Peru (1990) and Uruguay (1994).

Female representation has also increased in countries without quotas, although the increase has been slower and more unstable, as women's presence depends more on political will than any rules (see figure 5).

Figure 5
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (7 COUNTRIES): WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN
PARLIAMENT IN COUNTRIES WITH NO QUOTA LEGISLATION
(LOWER OR SINGLE CHAMBERS)**
(Percentages)
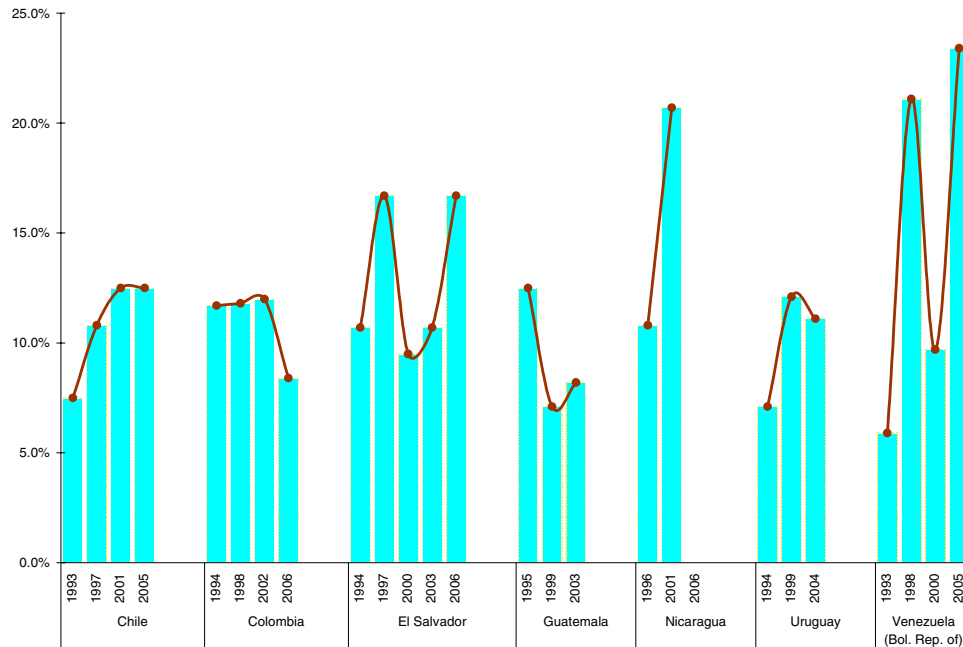
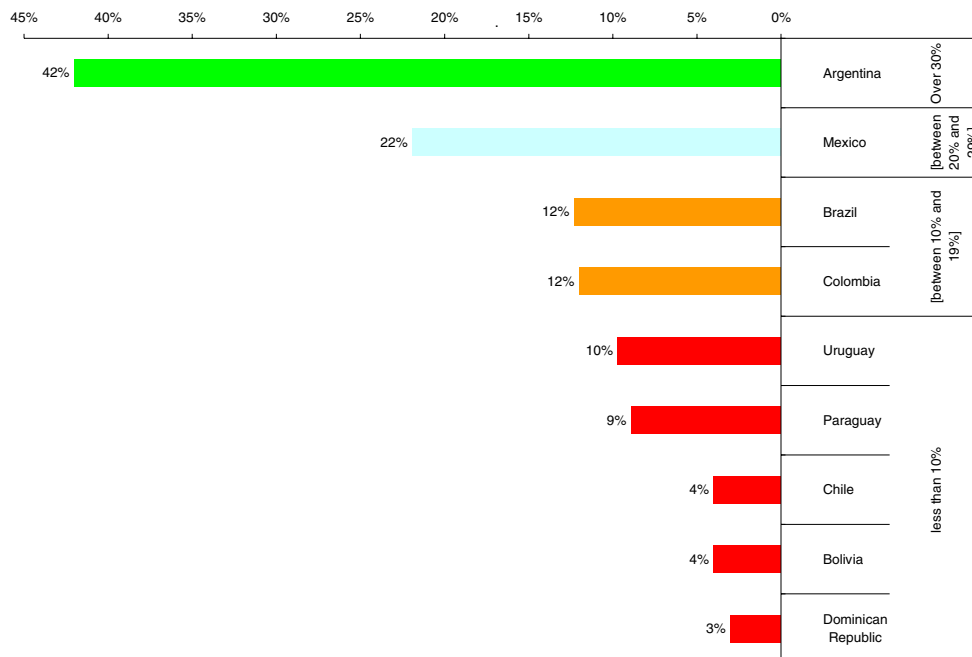**Source**: Prepared by the author on the basis of Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments" [online] http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world-arc.htm [date of reference: 10 December 2006].

Progress at the senate level has been less regular and apparent. Argentina and Mexico are the only countries where women represent over 20% of senators, which means there is less of a critical minority to resist any backlash.

Quota laws are a successful strategy for increasing and stabilizing the presence of women in parliament, and have generated a critical mass of women that can make headway towards parity. This strategy was implemented in a context favourable to gender equity —social transformations, growing economic and cultural exchange, and agreements adopted at world conferences— and was strengthened by the snowball effect of other quota laws in the region. Quota laws are most effective in systems of proportional representation that use closed lists, and in countries where the law demands that women occupy the first line, so that they have a real chance of being elected. These factors explain the successful growth of female representation between 1995 and 2004 in the two-chamber Parliament of Argentina and the legislative Congress of Costa Rica. However, the effectiveness of quotas depends not only on the nature of each country's electoral system, but also on the actions of political parties, which act as filters in electoral processes, political culture and democratic reform. The fact that there was a broad and committed political alliance in favour of increasing the political representation of women was fundamental in improving laws and closing loopholes.

Figure 6
LATIN AMERICA (9 COUNTRIES): REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE SENATE, 2006
(Percentages)

45%	40%	35%	30%	25%	20%	15%	10%	5%	0%	

42%	Argentina	Over 30%
22%	Mexico	[between 20% and 29%]
12%	Brazil	[between 10% and 19%]
12%	Colombia	
10%	Uruguay	
9%	Paraguay	
4%	Chile	less than 10%
4%	Bolivia	
3%	Dominican Republic	

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments" [online] http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world-arc.htm [date of reference: 10 December 2006].

B. ONCE IN PARLIAMENT

What happens when women enter parliament? What positions do they hold, what obstacles do they face and what are their perceptions and assessments of their contribution to political life and public welfare? Where do parliamentary women come from and what is their background?

Most women in parliament (78%) get there through their political parties, often at the invitation of a political leader. The proportion of women parliamentarians from outside party circles is lower, and in most cases women are invited by parties on account of their public and social recognition. Apart from these circumstances, women state that it is more difficult to access powerful positions within a party and be nominated in electoral lists and in parliament, as they tend to be excluded by a culture of machismo and male fraternity (IPU, 2000).

Women's access to parliament can be due to a combination of various factors including a history of social activism, local government positions, a successful professional career (lawyers, economists), political culture of family of origin and the support provided by the current family. Many of these women have already held positions in the executive or in parliament. Outside parliament, they continue their political and professional careers in prestigious decision-making positions. In most cases, they are part of a political elite that expands to let them in. Although in a minority, some women have become heads of parliament or one of its chambers, as in Uruguay (1963), Argentina (1973), Bolivia (1979), Costa Rica (1986), Nicaragua (1990), Guatemala (1991), the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (1998), the

Dominican Republic (1999) and Chile (2002). Women currently preside over parliament in three countries: Colombia, Peru and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Women parliamentarians report that that they are encouraged to take part in commissions concerned with social problems, but they are less involved in those considered more substantive. They describe an ongoing culture of implicit behavioural codes and rules that exclude them from informal settings for discussion and decision-making. Women complain of being the subject of jokes, and of the jealousy of some male politicians, who also find it difficult to accept the political ambitions of women. They also state that the explicit and implicit operating rules fail to take account of the demands of reconciling parliamentary activities with their private lives (IPU, 2000; Iturbe de Blanco, 2003; Hardy, 2005a).

Notwithstanding these obstacles, most women interviewed in the study by Hardy (Hardy, 2005a) have high self-esteem and state that their presence makes a positive difference in legislative work, as it transforms the priorities of the agenda (78%), domestic culture (79%) and rules and regulations (74%). Female parliamentarians declare themselves more concerned with social and ethical aspects (such as poverty, human rights, social justice and the environment), and state that they also face issues of corruption and falling standards in politics. They report that their presence is indispensable in tackling problems such as violence against women, the recognition of new rights and reconciling reproductive and productive work (IPU, 2000).

Their minority position, and their good opinion of their own performance, mean that 80% are in favour of affirmative action policies and quotas (of between 30% and 50%), as well as the promotion of cross-cutting partnerships to form the basis of legislative gender commissions (Guzmán, 2003). As for the electoral system, women are favourable to a limit on campaign spending, and advocated the creation of funds to enable women to compete on a more equal footing.

Table 3
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (17 COUNTRIES): TIMELINE OF WHEN A WOMAN FIRST PRESIDED OVER PARLIAMENT OR ONE OF THE CHAMBERS

|	
Uruguay	1963
Argentina	1973
Bolivia	1979
Dominica	1980
Belize	1984
Jamaica	1984
Costa Rica	1986
Granada	1990
Nicaragua	1990
Guatemala	1991
Trinidad and Tobago	1991
Bahamas	1997
Suriname	1997
Venezuela (Bol. Rep. of)	1998
Dominican Republic	1999
Chile	2002
Saint Kitts and Nevis	2004

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments" [online] http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world-arc.htm [date of reference: 16 August 2006].

C. WOMEN IN THE EXECUTIVE

In 1999, women were a minority in the ministerial cabinets of the world, and any female ministers were concentrated in social ministries. Even then, no ministry was formally closed to them (IPU, 2000).

In the case of Argentina, which has information on all male and female ministers in 18 ministries from 1973 to 2005, it is possible to track female representation over a considerable length of time. Over the 32 years, 245 ministers were appointed, of whom only 11 were women (4.7%). Women were first appointed in 1989 (in one ministry) and then again in 1996. From that year, women's presence was constant up to 2005, but did not increase.

Figure 7
ARGENTINA: MALE AND FEMALE MINISTERS, BY YEAR, 1973-2004
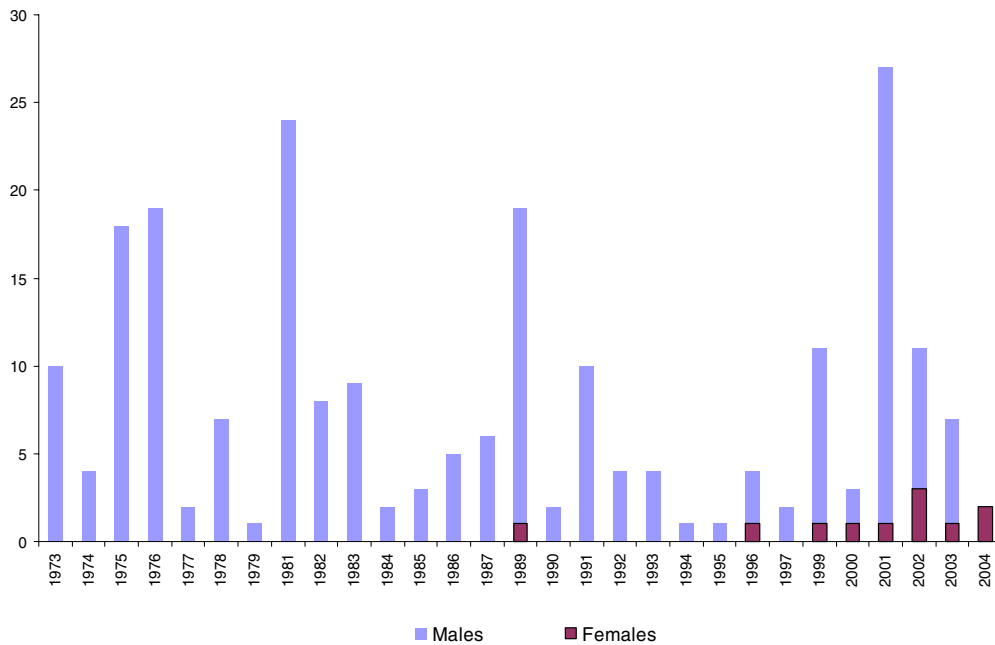
Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of "Rulers" [online] http://rulers.org/rula2.html#argentina [date of reference: 30 November 2006].

In 2006, the ECLAC Women and Development Unit sent a survey to all the region's gender institutions requesting information on the composition of ministerial cabinets during the last three presidential terms of office, which average five years each. Although there are still relatively few women in ministerial posts, there is an upward trend. In the last three presidential terms, the proportion has risen from 12% (first term), to 15% (second term) and to almost 20% (third term).

Figure 8
**LATIN AMERICA (12 COUNTRIES): AVERAGE PRESENCE OF WOMEN IN MINISTRIES,
LAST THREE PRESIDENTIAL TERMS**
(Percentages)
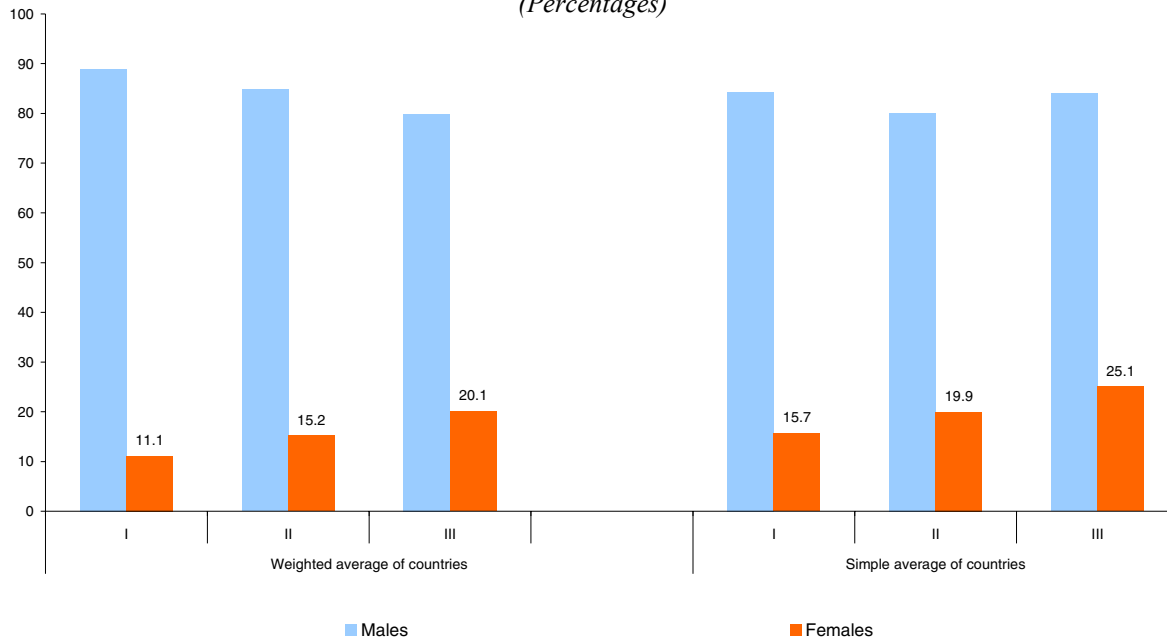
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of replies to a questionnaire sent out to countries (Santiago, Chile, 2006).

Ministerial portfolios in political and economic matters are those which have had and continue to have the lowest proportion of women. Female participation is greater in social affairs, followed by other ministerial portfolios (see figure 9). In the most recent period, 30% of ministerial posts occupied by women were in social ministries, which is seven percentage points higher than in the first presidential term studied. Between the first and the third terms, women's presence has risen by nine percentage points in the area of politics and by eight points in the economic field.

Figure 9
**LATIN AMERICA (12 COUNTRIES): WEIGHTED AVERAGE OF THE PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION
OF WOMEN AND MEN IN TERMS OF MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIOS
DURING THE MOST RECENT PRESIDENTIAL TERM**
(Percentages)
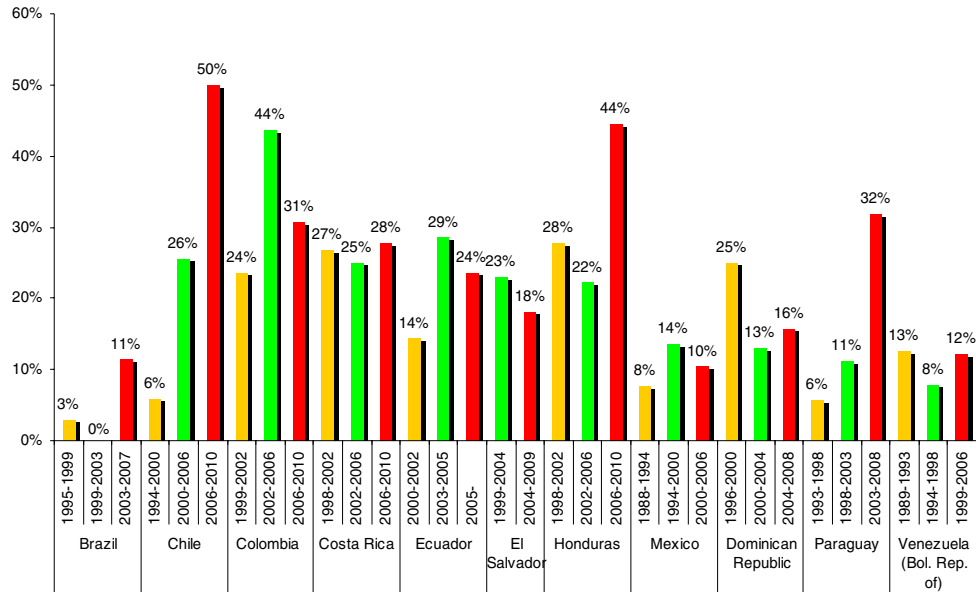
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of replies to a questionnaire sent out to countries (Santiago, Chile, 2006).

Chile and Paraguay are the only countries to show a consistent upward trend. In El Salvador and the Dominican Republic, the situation has worsened in relation to previous periods. The countries with the largest female presence during the most recent presidential term are Chile with 43.8% and Honduras with 41.2%; followed by Paraguay (34.1%) and Colombia (33.3%). At the bottom of the list are Brazil, with 11.7%, and Mexico, with 9.1%.

Chile, Colombia and Paraguay show an increased proportion of women in the political area, as does the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela from the second to the third period. The percentage of women decreased in Argentina, Ecuador, El Salvador and Mexico, while no change was observed in Brazil or the Dominican Republic.

Women have been gaining ground in the area of economics, especially between the second and third periods surveyed. In Argentina, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico and Paraguay the presence of women in economic affairs increased between the second and third presidential terms.

Figure 10
**LATIN AMERICA (12 COUNTRIES): PRESENCE OF WOMEN IN MINISTRIES,
LAST THREE PRESIDENTIAL TERMS**
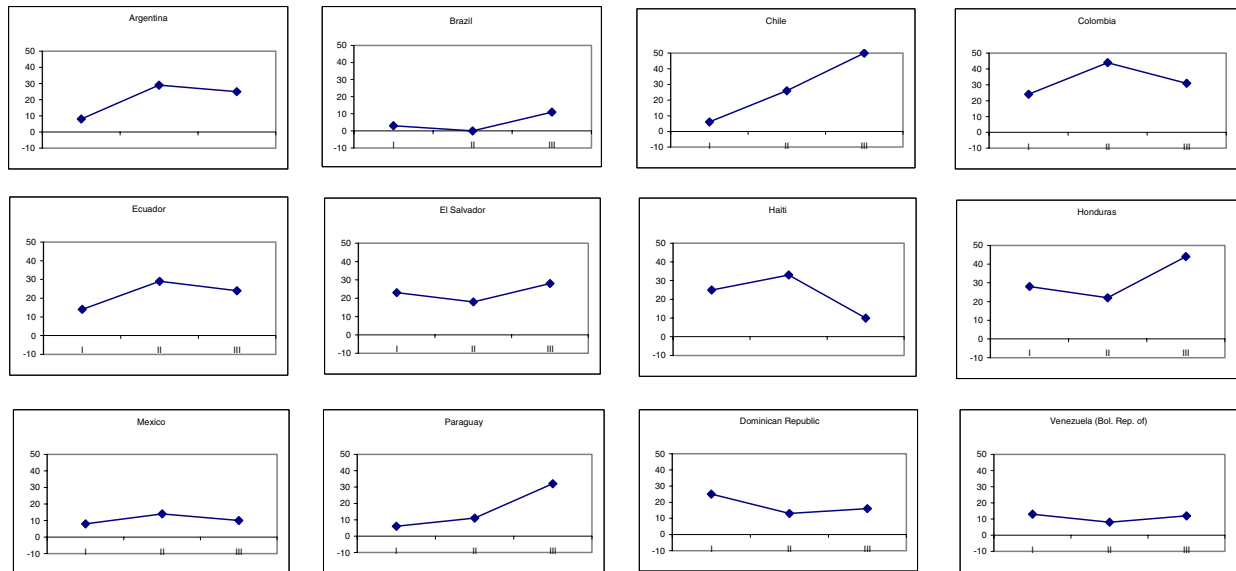
In most countries, the presence of women in social and cultural areas is continuing to rise in countries such as Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador and Paraguay.

Although the percentage of women in political and economic ministries has grown in different proportions to the percentages in social and cultural ministries, all increases show that there are now no areas closed to women. Also, the diversity of female authority figures helps to do away with the idea that all women are the same.

The female ministers in the government of Michelle Bachelet (Chile) agree that a parity-based government is conducive to the mainstreaming of gender equity in public policy and the adoption of measures to combat inequality. The fact that these women are in positions of authority relieves them of having to constantly negotiate and demonstrate the importance of such measures. They also refer to a new climate of mutual assistance, and a more relaxed style of political management and authority. Their presence in senior posts places them in a prime position for identifying valuable professional women who may have been marginalized at work with no prospect of advancement. Under female authority, these professional women are more likely to achieve positions of responsibility. The impressive subsequent career paths of the women concerned proves the discrimination that they had been subjected to prior to such intervention, as well as the importance of having a critical mass of female professionals in positions of responsibility (seminar on parity and equality in the government of Michelle Bachelet, Santiago, Chile, 16 December 2006).

Although the presence of women has grown at different rates in the legislative and executive branches, the increases nonetheless demonstrate cultural changes in terms of recognition of women's capabilities; reflects increased access to material resources and prestige; and are resulting in a critical

mass of women among political authorities and representatives. The fact that women occupy various ministerial and legislative positions shows that the time is now ripe for the region to set itself the goal of achieving parity.

Many female politicians, government authorities, women intellectuals and NGOs have spoken out over the demand for parity. As part of these calls, ECLAC has organized two seminars on the subject, and the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean have adopted agreements on the need to incorporate the issue into today's political agenda.

D. CONCLUSIONS: PARITY ON THE HORIZON

You may rely on this country and you may rely on this President and her Administration in the effort to forge a Latin American gender-parity alliance that will strengthen our ultimate egalitarian purpose to build a region that provides a more inclusive environment for all its women and for all its men.

Michelle Bachelet, President of Chile

Throughout history and with political processes lasting generations, women have successfully campaigned to be able to exercise their rights. Their political struggles have focused on access to public life and the resources and opportunities from which they were excluded. These struggles have blurred the distinction between the public and private spheres, and between what are considered public matters and private ones. In this sense, the cause has politicized issues that were previously taken for granted and lifted the lid on the kind of authoritative and paternalistic logic that prevailed in relationships in the private sphere. The movement has thus served to: uncover previously hidden inequality in social relations; extend rights to new social categories; define new collective, as well as individual, rights; and enrich popular political struggle for those excluded from society.

Women's achievements are the result of new ways of conducting politics. Civil action and new political groupings have given women great bargaining power for forming alliances and negotiating and legitimizing their ideas and demands. Feminism has had to develop new areas of thought and draw its own horizons along the way. Demands, imagination and the force of change have all risen up from within civil society, through a vibrant community of associations. There has been a bottom-up questioning of assumptions, and the persistent political vigour of women has forced political institutions to take increasing notice of their demands (Collin, 2006).

The recognition of women as political subjects with specific demands has been facilitated by democratic openness and institutional change motivated by social modernization processes and the emergence and acknowledgement of new political and social forces.

The prospect of parity in Latin America seems even closer thanks to society's openness to global cultural and economic influences; the emergence of newly recognized political subjects; and advances in education, employment and politics that are enabling women to access positions of power in greater numbers and more consistently. In the opposite scenario, one of ongoing social inequality and weak institutions, gender parity could become a major driving force for institutional and political change towards increased democracy, transparency and more open means of social participation.

The fight for political representation and decision-making responsibilities reflects a deep aspiration to build a society where men and women from different backgrounds have the necessary resources and recognition as equals to be able to define their social destinies. In terms of gender equality, major changes in the private sphere and public institutions will be required to remove the obstacles that have prevented women from exercising their rights since modern times began.

Improvements in the proportion of women in political representation have been facilitated by political alliances formed by women in support of affirmative action. Quotas have proved effective, because they place gender inequality on the public agenda; counteract visible and invisible obstacles to the nomination of women; and ensure that there are a variety of women in power, promoting recognition of their individuality and differences and challenging stereotypes. Furthermore, quotas have given more stability to women's presence in parliaments, making their position less vulnerable to changes in political forces and ideological debates.

Not only has the increased number of women in power resulted in the recognition of new rights for women and the implementation of policies that tackle the most important problems of discrimination (violence, sexual and reproductive rights, reconciling private and public lives), but it has also helped to change politics by promoting a new generation, an appreciation of politicians' education and knowledge, faster turnover of politicians, the establishment of links to citizens and the inclusion on the agenda of the difficulty of reconciling public and private lives or productive and reproductive activities. Women in power also raise the profile of other women, promoting their political and professional careers and establishing social legitimacy and support networks.

The move from quotas to parity is not merely a numerical change to compensate a socially excluded group, but rather a transformation of the very meaning of political representation into a concept that embraces diversity and distances itself from false universal values based on the interests of the most powerful and the exclusion of other citizens of both sexes. This recognition of diversity is a new way of building universal values and notions of the public good, one that is based on negotiation and consensus, the recognition of conflict, and an acknowledgement of the different systems of inequality that make up society. In this sense, in a context where women are still excluded, the gender-parity movement is a call for a rethink of the whole field of politics.

Gender parity can therefore not be reduced to its quantitative aspects, as they do not guarantee parity in the distribution of power, meaning equal numbers of men and women in strategic positions and key posts. What is more, quantitative parity will be useless if the women who benefit from it are unaware of the general situation of women and do not take account of it in their work. It is vital to continue to work with, rather than break away from, civil-society movements and initiatives, as well as grass-roots associations and those that can provide objective analysis and reflection.

The political groupings set up around women's rights in recent decades could contribute to the struggle for gender parity. These groupings are so diverse and are made up of individuals from such different backgrounds (civil-society activists, male and female academics and State authorities and officials), that awareness about gender equity and parity could spread throughout all spheres of society.

Part of the regional debate on political representation, and more recently gender parity, is about reviewing strategies implemented to date. The political arm of the gender-equity movement has proposed various comprehensive measures that combine the promotion of female leadership, networks involving all parties and civil society, and encouraging women's associations. It is also vital to create opportunities for dialogue between men and women in order for political action to be egalitarian.

One significant line of action in need of development is how to make the most of women's achievements by disseminating women's ideas and analyses of political issues and both men's and women's political thinking in favour of gender equality. Thus, disseminating the achievements of gender mainstreaming in public policy illustrates the different experiences and needs of men and women, and the alliances that are built up, while also highlighting the role of gender institutions in coordinating public policy.

The debate also involves considering new management styles conducive to a culture that assesses political work, as well as a change in party political culture and State actions. Restrictions on the plurality of offices, the number of consecutive mandates, transparency and the regular publication of concrete achievements are all part of a new approach to politics.

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ANNEX

Table A-1
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (21 COUNTRIES): CATEGORIZATION OF THE INFORMATION ON QUOTA SYSTEMS IN FAVOUR OF GENDER EQUITY

Country	Electoral system [a]	Constitutional quota	Quota law	Subnational quotas (constitution or law)	Quota Percent age	Legal sanctions	Order rules	Quotas in political parties
Argentina	PR	Yes	Yes (1991)	Yes	30	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bolivia	MMP	No	Yes (2001)	Yes	30	Yes	Yes	Yes
Brazil	PR	No	Yes (1997)	Yes (1995)	30	Yes	No	Yes
Chile	PR	No	No			N/A	--	Yes
Colombia	PR	No	No			No	--	No
Costa Rica	PR	No	Yes (1999)	Yes	40	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ecuador	PR	No	Yes	Yes	30	Yes	Yes	Yes
El Salvador	PR	No	No			N/A	--	Yes
Guatemala	PR	No	No			No	No	No
Guyana	PR	Yes	No			N/A	--	No
Haiti	TRS	No	No			No	--	Yes
Honduras	PR	No	Yes	Yes	30	No	--	N/A
Mexico	MMP	No	Yes (2002)		30	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nicaragua	PR	No	No			No	--	Yes
Panama	PR	No	Yes (1997)		30	N/A	--	No
Paraguay	PR	No	Yes (1996)	Yes	20	Yes	No	Yes
Peru	PR	No	Yes (1997)	Yes	30	Yes	No	No
Dominican Republic	PR	No	Yes (1997)	Yes (2000)	33	Yes	Yes	Yes
Trinidad and Tobago	FPTP	No	No			No	No	No
Uruguay	PR	No	No			No	No	Yes
Venezuela (Bol. Rep. of)	MMP	No	No			Yes	--	Yes

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), "Global Database of Quotas for Women" [online] http://www.quotaproject.org/ [date of reference: 16 August 2006].

[a]   PR: Proportional Representation; MMP: Mixed Member Proportional Representation; TRS: Two Round System; FPTP: First Past the Post.

Table A-2
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (14 COUNTRIES): POLITICAL PARTIES WITH GENDER EQUITY QUOTA SYSTEMS

Country	Political party	Quota
Argentina	Partido Justicialista (PJ)	30
	Unión Cívica Radical (UCR)	30 (2002)
	Frente del País Solidario (FREPASO)	30
	Unión del Centro Democrático (UCD)	30
	Autodeterminación y Libertad (AL)	30
	Partido Demócrata (PD)	30
	Frente Grande (FG)	30 (1995)
	Movimiento por la Dignidad y la Independencia (MODIN)	30
	Movimiento por la Integración y Desarrollo (MID)	30 (2001)
	Partido Socialista Popular (PS)	30 (2002)
Bolivia	Movimiento Sin Miedo (MSM)	50 [a]
Brazil	Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT)	30 [b]
Chile	Partido Por la Democracia (PPD)	40/60 [c]
	Partido Socialista (PS)	40/60 (1998) [d]
	Partido Demócrata Cristiano (PDC)	20 [e]
Costa Rica	Partido de Liberación Nacional (PLN)	40
	Partido Unidad Socialcristiana (PUSC)	40
	Partido Acción Ciudadana (PAC)	50 [f]
Ecuador	Partido Roldosista Ecuatoriano (PRE)	25
	Partido Izquierda Democrática (PID)	25
	Democracia Popular (DP)	25
	Partido Social Cristiano (PSC)	25
	Acción Popular Revolucionaria Ecuatoriana (APRE)	50
El Salvador	Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN)	35
Haiti	Mouvement National des Mouvements Démocratiques (KONAKON)	25
Mexico	Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)	50
	Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD)	30
Nicaragua	Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN)	30
Paraguay	Asociación Nacional Republicana/Partido Colorado (ANR)	20
	Partido Revolucionario Febrerista (PRF)	30
Dominican Republic	Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD)	25 (1994)
Uruguay	Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores	30 (1984)
	Partido Socialista del Uruguay	Relativo [g]
Venezuela (Bol. Rep. of)	Acción Democrática (AD)	30
	Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS)	30

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), "Global Database of Quotas for Women" [online] http://www.quotaproject.org/ [date of reference: 16 August 2006].

[a] Percentage of the number of candidates elected.
[b] Applies to electoral lists and internal positions.
[c] Neither gender may have more than 60% of candidacies. This provision is not very widely complied with.
[d] Quota of 40% to 60% for each sex. This provision is not very widely complied with.
[e] This provision is not very widely complied with.
[f] For elections to the Chamber of deputies.
[g] The quota was introduced in 1980, and depends on the percentage of female militants in each jurisdiction.

Table A-3
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (18 COUNTRIES): WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PARLIAMENT, 1995-2006

Country	Lower or single chambers				Upper chamber			
	Date of election	Total seats	Women		Date of election	Total seats	Women	
			Number	Percentage			Number	Percentage
Argentina	05/1995	257	65	25.3	12/1995	72	2	2.8
	10/1997	257	71	27.6	12/1995	75	17	22.7
	10/1999	257	72	28.0	12/1999	72	4	5.6
	10/2001	257	79	30.7	10/2001	72	24	33.3
	10/2005	257	93	36.2	10/2005	72	30	41.7
Bolivia	06/1993	130	9	6.9	06/1993	27	1	3.7
	06/1997	130	15	11.5	06/1997	27	1	3.7
	06/2002	130	24	18.5	06/2002	27	4	14.8
	12/2005	130	22	16.9	12/2005	27	1	3.7
Brazil	10/1994	513	34	6.6	10/1994	81	6	7.4
	10/1998	513	29	5.7	10/1998	81	6	7.4
	10/2002	130	24	18.5	06/2002	27	4	14.8
Chile	12/1993	120	9	7.5	12/1993	46	3	6.5
	12/1997	120	13	10.8	12/1997	46	2	4.3
	12/2001	120	15	12.5	12/2001	49	2	4.1
	12/2005	120	15	12.5	12/2005	49	2	4.1
Colombia	03/1994	163	19	11.7	03/1994	102	7	6.9
	03/1998	161	19	11.8	03/1998	102	13	12.7
	03/2002	166	20	12.0	03/2002	102	9	8.8
	03/2006	166		8.4	03/2006	102		12.0
Costa Rica	02/1994	57	9	17.3	--	--	--	--
	02/1998	57	11	19.3	--	--	--	--
	02/2002	57	20	35.1	--	--	--	--
	02/2006	57	22	38.6	--	--	--	--
Ecuador	05/1996	82	3	3.7	--	--	--	--
	05/1998	121	21	17.4	--	--	--	--
	10/2002	100	16	16.0	--	--	--	--
	2006							
El Salvador	05/1994	84	9	10.7	--	--	--	--
	03/1997	84	14	16.7	--	--	--	--
	03/2000	84	8	9.5	--	--	--	--
	03/2003	84	9	10.7	--	--	--	--
	03/2006	84	14	16.7	--	--	--	--
Guatemala	11/1995	80	12	12.5	--	--	--	--
	11/1999	113	8	7.1	--	--	--	--
	11/2003	158	13	8.2	--	--	--	--
Honduras	11/1993	128	10	7.8	--	--	--	--
	11/1997	128	12	9.4	--	--	--	--
	11/2001	128	7	5.5	--	--	--	--
	11/2005	128	30	23.4	--	--	--	--
Mexico	07/1997	500	71	14.2	07/1997	128	16	12.5
	07/2000	500	80	16.0	07/2000	128	20	15.6
	07/2003	500	113	22.6	07/2003	128	20	15.6
	07/2006	500			07/2006	128	22	17.2
Nicaragua	10/1996	93	10	10.8	--	--	--	--
	11/2001	92	19	20.7	--	--	--	--
	11/2006							
Panama	05/1994	72	7	9.7	--	--	--	--
	05/1999	72	7	9.7	--	--	--	--
	05/2004	78	13	16.7	--	--	--	--

Table A-3

Country	Lower or single chambers				Upper chamber			
	Date of election	Total seats	Women		Date of election	Total seats	Women	
			Number	Percentage			Number	Percentage
Paraguay	05/1993	80	2	2.5	05/1993	45	5	11.1
	05/1998	80	2	2.5	05/1998	45	8	17.8
	04/2003	80	7	8.8	04/2003	45	4	8.9
Peru	04/1995	120	13	10.8	--	--	--	--
	04/2000	120	24	20.0	--	--	--	--
	04/2001	120	22	17.5	--	--	--	--
	04/2006	120	35	29.2	--	--	--	--
Dominican Republic	05/1994	120	14	11.7	05/1994	30	1	3.3
	05/1998	149	24	16.1	05/1998	30	2	6.7
	05/2002	150	26	17.3	05/2002	32	2	6.3
	05/2006	178	35	19.7	05/2006	32	1	3.1
Uruguay	11/1994	99	7	7.1	11/1994	31	2	6.5
	10/1999	99	12	12.1	10/1999	31	3	9.7
	10/2004	99	11	11.1	10/2004	31	3	9.7
Venezuela (Bol. Rep. of)	12/1993	203	12	5.9	12/1993	50	4	8.0
	11/1998	206	25	21.1	11/1998	57	5	8.8
	07/2000	165	16	9.7	--	--	--	--
	12/2005	128	30	23.4	--	--	--	--

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments" [online] http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world-arc.htm [date of reference: 16 August 2006].