PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP IN LATIN

AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN:

GENDER INDICATORS

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INTRODUCTION

The adoption of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1967 marked the beginning of international efforts to achieve gender equity and put an end to the discrimination from which women suffer. The second important step was the World Conference of the international year for women, held in Mexico City in 1975, where a start was made on producing an international women's agenda. Although this social process has not been without difficulties, the Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean have become more and more firmly committed to it.

Shortly afterwards, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted by Governments in 1979, created a set of international standards for progress towards gender equity. With the century drawing to a close, the Convention has been ratified by all the countries in the region. This represents crucial progress for women, as they are now protected against discrimination by an international legal instrument, the binding character of which was strengthened in 1999 by the preparation of an optional protocol establishing procedures for exercising the right of petition in respect of the Convention and for investigating serious or systematic breaches of the human rights it enshrines. This protocol was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations at its fifty-fourth session.

Throughout this process, the struggle for equity has brought together a range of actors, and has been led mainly by women themselves, women's organizations and non-governmental organizations. Nonetheless, United Nations bodies have played a very important role both in legitimizing the struggles of women's organizations and in providing advice to Governments and assisting them in their efforts.

Government authorities and parliamentarians have come to play an increasingly important role, turning the undertakings made when the Convention was ratified in 1979 into public policies.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the regional process began in 1977 with the first session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (Havana). This has since become a standing body that elects Presiding Officers and is convened every three years. The Presiding Officers meet twice a year and provide a link between Governments and the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) for matters to do with gender equity and the advancement of women.

The first Regional Conference approved the Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development, and this was supplemented in 1994 by the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001 (ECLAC, 1995), adopted by the sixth Conference held in Mar del Plata, Argentina, in 1994 to consider the changes that had taken place in the region since the Plan was adopted and the effects it had had on the situation of women. Among other contributions, the Programme of Action describes "equitable access for women to power structures and decision-making processes through mechanisms and actions that enable them to participate effectively in the development of full democracy" as one of the priorities and strategic axes for improving the position of women.

Besides this, since the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace was held in Beijing in 1995, there has been growing interest in the development of mechanisms to evaluate the way women are improving their position in society and, in particular, the measures being taken by Governments and civil society in the countries to further this process. Evaluation involves not just follow-up of the measures taken, but quantitative and qualitative assessment of their effectiveness and impact.

The Beijing Platform for Action itself stipulates that countries are obliged to monitor and evaluate the progress achieved in improving the representation and participation of women. It states that, for this purpose, Governments must keep regular statistics on the presence of women at all levels of decision-making, both in Government and outside it, and in those processes that have gender equity as their outcome (United Nations, 1995). Similarly, they are required to analyse and publish this information annually, together with qualitative data on the situation of women and men.

In the light of this, at the twenty-second meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, held in 1996, the countries attending instructed the Secretariat of ECLAC to produce indicators for use in evaluating the current situation and the improvements that could be expected in future in respect of the participation and leadership of women as an expression of progress towards gender equity.

To this end, a working agreement was signed between the Women and Development Unit of ECLAC and the Gender Studies Department of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), within the framework of its programme for Santiago, Chile. The work was carried out in a number of stages, beginning in 1997 when a set of indicators was created with a view to obtaining a sort of snapshot of how things stood in terms of the socio-political participation of women and their presence in positions of leadership in 37 Latin American and Caribbean countries.

This initial list of indicators was sent to the countries, and information soon began to come in from governmental and non-governmental bodies. In the light of this information, the selected indicators were revised and renewed emphasis was placed on the need to obtain data from the women in charge of Government offices for the advancement of women in the different countries.

The response from the countries was very positive, and the data provided were of considerable value. Between June and September 1998 the information received was sorted, processed and systematized. Nonetheless, there were still gaps in the data which made it difficult to obtain an accurate overview of the extent of participation and access to power among women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

To meet the demand for information as far as possible, recourse was had to other sources. Among these were the latest report of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), information supplied by other United Nations bodies, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Governments themselves through their Web pages, the FLACSO Statistics on Latin American Women database and some publications produced by women's non-governmental organizations from different countries in the region.

The purpose of the present publication is to submit the results of this work so that they are available to governmental and non-governmental bodies concerned with improving gender equity.[1] It should be regarded as a starting point that will provide a basis for future reports on whatever positive or negative developments may occur.

At the same time, this report identifies information and research gaps that the countries can take account of when drawing up their national agendas, so that current shortcomings can be rectified.

This report is essentially descriptive. It is like an up-to-date snapshot, an overview with few nuances. Rigorous, contextualized analysis of the information gathered, and comparisons between countries and subregions, would require more time, space and research.

The different chapters of this document deal with conceptual aspects pertaining to the socio-political participation of women and to the indicators. They present the statistical information that has been collected on the presence of women in politics and society and on the progress that has been made in applying public gender equity policies. The document also contains a bibliography, a list of the information sources used and a full listing of the indicators requested, which shows where gaps were encountered and where the relevant information was difficult to obtain or unavailable.

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[1] The information analysis is based exclusively on the data that were available up to September 1999.

I. WOMEN'S SOCIO-POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP ON THE INTERNATIONAL AGENDA

The status of women has been a matter of international concern for decades, both in the United Nations (Commission on the Status of Women) and in the Organization of American States (Inter-American Commission of Women). One of the main concerns has been the absence of women from the spheres where decisions are taken, a visible manifestation of inequality.

As early as 1975, it was argued at the World Conference of the International Women's Year, held in Mexico City, that political participation was one of the keys to integrating women into development. On the basis of an analysis that revealed how poorly women were represented in leadership positions, it was recommended that extending the participation of women in decision-making should be considered a strategic objective. A number of measures were proposed for this purpose, and were included on the agendas of the subsequent United Nations Conferences.

Some of these measures were: informing women about their rights as citizens and encouraging them to exercise these, ensuring that women had the right to vote and to stand for public office, and promoting widespread female participation at every level of decision-making.

At the first Conference, held in Mexico City, the United Nations Decade for Women:

Equality, Development and Peace (1976-1985) had been declared, in the expectation that substantial progress would be achieved over the decade. To this end the different United Nations bodies made technical and material resources available and created specific programmes to help incorporate women into development.

Ever since this first World Conference and the first session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (Havana, 1977), regional and world meetings have been held regularly to deal with the concern for women to be integrated into the decision-making sphere. It is worth emphasising that major developments have occurred in the international situation over this period, and the approach to women's issues has also changed. This is because more information and knowledge have been built up about the different factors that affect their gender status, which has led to increasing conceptual precision.

This change was made evident at the different meetings and conferences, as were the enormous obstacles that still hinder women from gaining access to the positions where influence is exercised and decisions made in their countries. At the second World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, held in Copenhagen in 1980, the issues discussed and debated in Mexico were examined anew, it being recognized that little progress had been made. Whether progress is made or ground lost does not depend only on the commitment of Governments and international organizations or the strength of organizations in the women's movement; economic and socio-political processes around the world also have enormous influence.

The third World Conference (Nairobi, Kenya, 1985) was held against the background of a very severe world economic crisis, which had a serious effect on Latin America and the Caribbean. The subjects of poverty, Third World debt and the adjustment programmes imposed by the world economic authorities featured prominently in debates among women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other women's bodies in the Non-Governmental Organizations' Forum. Certainly, subjecting countries to drastic budget reductions and cuts in social protection policies was unlikely to advance the cause of equity. This was the so-called "lost decade" in the region, with ten years of zero growth.

The World Conference evaluated the achievements of the Decade for Women, whose motto was "equality, development and peace", and confirmed the negative impact that the economic crisis had had on the situation of women. The evaluation revealed that, although

the goals and aspirations agreed on by the international, governmental and civil society actors involved had not been achieved, the issue had been placed on the national and international agenda during the period, and the standards set at that time are now a real influence on the politics and societies of the Latin American countries, and on the lives of thousands of women who are trying to develop as full citizens.

It was here that the document "Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women" was approved. In respect of participation and leadership, this document pointed to the need for a joint strategy involving Governments, non-governmental organizations, the academic world and other actors in order to promote the participation of women in development policy- and decision-making.

During the 1980s, a number of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean initiated re-democratization processes. At the same time women, and feminists in particular, succeeded in giving universal currency to an approach based on the concept of gender and the analysis that springs from this, which has proved to be an effective instrument for understanding the transformation of sexual difference into inequality in social processes. All this has brought to the forefront the subjects of women's leadership and their participation in the spheres where decision-making takes place. Against this background, the commitment of Governments to achieving progress in gender equity has gradually crystallized, largely in the form of new governmental institutions with responsibility for implementing policies for the advancement of women. Subsequently, point G. of the world Platform for Action approved by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, which deals with "women in power and decision-making", based its strategic objectives and measures on the consideration that, under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to take part in the government of his or her country. It also pointed out that achieving equality of participation in decision-making between men and women would produce a balance that more accurately reflected the composition of society, and that it was necessary to strengthen democracy and enable it to function properly. Equitable participation in political life would play a crucial role in the advancement of women.

According to the Platform for Action, this process has the potential to strengthen and promote democracy by making it viable for equality to be incorporated into public policy-making, for government and administration to be made transparent and accountable and, lastly, for a form of sustainable development to be extended to all areas of life. It points out that the empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's

social, economic and political status are necessary preconditions for this (United Nations, 1975, p. 98). It suggests that, while there is a movement towards democratization in most countries, women are usually under-represented at almost every level and in almost all authorities within the State and in executive positions in unions, employers' organizations, professional associations and political parties. It points out that the obstacles to full participation by women derive not only from institutional structures and mechanisms, but also from stereotypes and discriminatory practices in the public and private spheres. Again, special mention is made of the discouraging effects for women of having to cope with family and child-care responsibilities at the same time as they pursue a job, a political career or social leadership.

Although where participation and leadership are concerned the Platform for Action is based on the concept of equal rights, it recognizes that the capabilities and resources of women differ depending on the economic, social and cultural conditions in which they live. These differences can be seen whether the comparison is with men or between women themselves. The need to which this gives rise, as far as the State is concerned, is for specific public policies aimed at groups of women in situations of social exclusion or marginalization for reasons of age, race, disability, ethnicity, poverty or a combination of factors, and for policies to benefit women as a whole, in order to achieve balance between women and men. In short, the Platform seeks equity, which is seen as equality combined with appreciation of difference.

Within the region, the sixth Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (Mar del Plata, 1994), preparatory to the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, approved a Regional Programme of Action which served as an input for the document being prepared by the Governments for Beijing. The strategic objectives of this Programme were:

a) The promotion of different forms of affirmative action to provide and extend access for women to the exercise of power in the legislative, judicial, executive, administrative and planning spheres.

b) The promotion of initiatives aimed at bringing about conditions whereby women can achieve equitable political representation and participation in the formal and informal spheres of civil society, in all decision-making processes and in the area of development planning.

The quest for equitable participation is based on the democratic ideal which holds that actively incorporating women into politics and other areas of public decision-making would enhance democracy, open up opportunities for creating a sustainable form of development and contribute to the transparency and general representativeness of the system. This would be achieved both through the incorporation of an under-represented sector into the public sphere and through the specific contributions that the social gender position of women would enable them to make to politics.

The lack of parity and balance that our societies evince in terms of the representation of women in the decision-making process reveals that powers are distributed unequally in both the private and public spheres. This means that access is not enough by itself and that it needs to be accompanied by improvements in the capabilities of women and by State policies that incorporate this concept of balance between the genders in both targeted and general policies. There is likewise a need for political action not just to reform structures, mechanisms and institutions, but also to change stereotypes and discriminatory cultural patterns. In other words, reforms at the macrosocial level accompanied by changes in daily life in a dialectical and reciprocal relationship.

Primarily, the idea of gender equity means improving the participation of women by means of positive action and social empowerment. More or less implicitly, though, this type of improvement requires both that individuals gain power and independence and that gender relations change in the private sphere, against a background of respect for cultural identities, meaning by this not just gender, but also class, race and other types of identity.

Underlying all this is the notion of process, in the social, political, economic and cultural spheres, whereby a range of actors come together in time and in different spaces, with different capabilities and resources. In this context, the State has to protect, promote, assist, evaluate and supervise tasks that it needs to perform in collaboration with non-governmental organizations and civil society, with the aim of implementing more cooperative, less vertical policies.

This United Nations-driven process of setting an international agenda for progress in gender equity has been accompanied by other initiatives. Of particular importance are the Inter-American Summits held in Miami in 1994 and in Santiago, Chile, in 1998, which involved Governments explicitly committing themselves to initiatives aimed at increasing the presence of women in positions of power.

At the same time, the 1997 World Inter-Parliamentary Conference considered the question of quotas for legislative positions, and concluded that the correct level for these was around 30%.[2] In that same year the Santiago Consensus, proposing the adoption of affirmative action measures, among other agreements, was signed at the Seventh Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Santiago, Chile. Shortly before this, the ministers in charge of women's affairs in those Caribbean countries that are Commonwealth[3] members had set a participation target of 30% quotas for decision-making bodies.

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[2] This figure is not arbitrary, but is based on the idea that when the representation of a minority group in political institutions (parties, congress) increases to a figure of around 30%, this group acquires the ability to set agendas and form alliances that benefit it (See Dahlerup Drude, 1985).

[3] The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 50 Governments (of sovereign countries, originally linked to the British Empire) that work for international peace and understanding.

II. STATISTICS AND INDICATORS
OF SOCIO-POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

T o say that the presence of women in decision-making positions is not commensurate with their contribution to society is not an ideological or capricious claim, but one that can be demonstrated by objective data. It is a fact that women in the region have been steadily leaving the domestic sphere and entering the labour market and different areas of public life. Nonetheless, their new participatory role is a subordinate one and does not extend to the political and social spheres where power is exercised.

The purpose of the information given below is to show how limited the socio-political participation of women is. It consists mainly of quantitative statistical data, but other types of information are also provided. Taken all together, they provide the basis for different indicators to measure or evaluate the progress of women and advances in gender equity.

Statistics are numerical data used to record certain characteristics of a set of individuals or observations which provide a basis for drawing conclusions and making decisions. They can be used to distinguish between situations, show different aspects of them and study relationships, and to gain knowledge of a particular characteristic, fact or action, its distribution in the population being studied and its development over time.

The choice of areas or subjects for statistical analysis is guided by an understanding of

social phenomena. This means determining what is going to be measured, and how, as statistics correspond to certain specific criteria or objectives; in other words, not all the characteristics of a set of people are recorded systematically, but rather the records and measurements made are determined by a purpose, which may be academic, administrative or political.

In this case, what are needed are statistics that can enable us to evaluate the progress made by women in terms of participation and leadership, and help us formulate, implement and evaluate policies and programmes that can serve to bring about further improvements in this area.

Indicators, for their part, are measures that are constructed to synthesize important situations whose development over time is to be studied (Gálvez, 1994). They are produced from the statistical information available to answer specific questions which are formulated on the basis of a particular conceptual framework or project for change. They must therefore be pertinent and relevant measures that derive from a particular process of selection and elaboration based on the data provided by statistical systems. They may be descriptive or analytical (Guzmán and Ríos, 1995). Indicators are used to analyse results that are determined to be desirable in relation to a variable, establish accurate and rigorous comparisons between groups and sectors of the population, geographical areas, etc., and identify social problems and disparities. They enable us to study trends, i.e. to identify the changes experienced over time, be they positive or negative.

In the case of indicators dealing with the participation and leadership of women, the idea is to give a picture of a complex social process whose goal is gender equity, and in which different actors participate in different ways. The aim is to understand changes in social organization, in a culture that has traditionally relegated women to the private sphere, reserving the public sphere for men.

For these purposes, in this study we have identified indicators of both "political will" and "results". "Indicators of political will" are measures that show the extent to which Governments are committed to gender equity, and they provide information on the efforts being made to make good this commitment. They are variables of a qualitative type, which means they are proxy indicators that provide a rough measure of the phenomenon being studied (Third World Institute, 1997). They might refer, for example, to the creation of organizations for the advancement of women, the introduction of bills or of regional or

local regulations, or the formulation of specific programmes, among other things. "Result indicators", for their part, measure the consequences of different processes or actions in relation to a specific target (Faletto and Baño, 1993). These are quantitative indicators, measures that may express the degree of success in the form of a percentage or numerical result, or of rates of change in the ratio between two or more variables.

To appreciate the processes of change that we are concerned with here, it was necessary to establish a particular conceptual framework that would enable us both to choose the relevant statistics and to produce appropriate indicators.

A. REFERENCE FRAMEWORK FOR INDICATORS

The reference framework used to identify indicators is the one provided by the documents referred to in the previous section. The diagnoses carried out for the Fourth World Conference on Women suggest that the primary reason for the exclusion of women from public life is imbalance in gender relations (between women and men) and day-to-day discrimination which extends to the public sphere. This gender inequality is one of the main barriers to the attainment of social equity and greater democracy.

Historically, political action has produced and perpetuated, fed and been fed by a form of social organization in which the sexual division of labour creates norms, identities and institutions that stereotype and discriminate against women (Astelarra, 1990). This is why the persistent inequities that affect them are also reflected in the political sphere and in the under-representation of women wherever significant power is exercised.

Although women have demonstrated social leadership capabilities, the traditional stereotypes of the sexual division of labour that define what is feminine and what is masculine reinforce the tendency for political decisions to be largely monopolized by men. Against this background, the presence that women now have in public life in the region has been achieved to a very large extent through their own political struggles. These struggles have been waged under adverse conditions, in a culture where participation and leadership are built on power relationships that relegate women to a subordinate position with respect to men. To a great extent, the progress we now see is the result of the actions and role of the women's movement, both within countries and in international bodies and

structures. Nonetheless, the way women have acted has differed according to the political, economic and social conditions and the specific history of their activities in each country.

Participation is a powerful political tool for negotiating with other actors on certain decisions that affect the gender balance in society.

In the public arena, different spheres and levels of decision-making can be identified. The figures show that a disproportionate number of men attain to the highest positions, while women's access to power and their hold on it are more precarious. While some progress has been achieved, the efforts made so far have been insufficient.

Political power makes it possible to build a desired order. This order must include gender equity as a prerequisite for improving levels of participation and democracy in our countries. Equitable participation presupposes a growing role for women in public life, on a basis of equality in political and social rights. This means increasing not just the transparency of political processes, but also the possibility of narrowing the gap between State action and the concerns of citizens. In other words, the democratic process needs to be strengthened and deepened.

If participation is about exercising influence in public life, leadership is about the ability to transform reality and implement plans for social change. In both cases, the idea is that if they were exercised fully, they would help to shape a pluralist, representative and participatory democracy. In other words, participation and leadership generate more participation and leadership. The fact is that overcoming the difficulties that women face means removing the obstacles that prevent them from participating, and creating the conditions they need to do so. If the situation is to be turned around, State authorities need to show commitment to progress in gender equity by reforming and enforcing legislation, designing and implementing public policies and providing the necessary resources, and the same commitment needs to be shown by political parties and economic and cultural agents. There is also a need to remove or diminish those subjective factors that hinder women from leading an active political life, such as fear of competing with men, insecurity about their own capabilities and internalization of stereotypes concerning the type of role they ought to be playing, among other things.

B. THE INDICATORS SELECTED

In selecting the indicators, the distinction referred to earlier between "indicators of political will" and "indicators of results" was applied. The indicators chosen, and their aims, are given below.

In accordance with the concept of participation that this study is concerned with, the presence of women in the public spheres and events that are fundamental to the social and political life of the countries is an "indicator of results", these results being obtained through a range of social processes of change and through the application of measures to promote female participation. The target for the indicator is parity of representation or equivalence of participation between women and men. This means that the gap between the actual value of the indicator and the goal of parity represents the distance that needs to be covered for gender equity to be achieved.

In the political sphere, the areas identified were the State authorities – the executive (national, local, diplomatic representation), the legislature and the judiciary – and political parties. In each of these, the goal is parity of presence (50%). Participation in events that are an expression of the exercise of citizenship, such as presidential, parliamentary and municipal elections, was also treated as an "indicator of results" encapsulating subjective forms of participation by women in politics and public affairs. The goal would be for this to match the female population of voting age.

As regards governmental action, "indicators of political will" include the establishment of governmental mechanisms for the advancement of women at the different national, provincial and local levels and of programmes in ministries and departments of State, and the development of specific plans and policies aimed at securing equal opportunities for women.

In parliaments and political parties, the creation of specialist commissions to deal with legislation affecting women was deemed to be an "indicator of political will", as was the introduction of affirmative action laws and regulations, such as quotas, in national legislation or internal party rules.

In the social sphere, the presence of women on the governing bodies of trade union confederations and urban and rural workers' unions, cooperatives, professional associations,

business or employers' organizations, student federations and all organizations that represent a differential distribution of social power is an "indicator of results". The target would be parity of participation on these governing bodies, or at least a level of participation that matched that in the membership at large.

Meanwhile, women's organizations that organize initiatives and a political agenda for women are of great importance in the social fabric of the region, as are non-governmental organizations. The existence of these, their growth over time and the dynamism they display are indicators of both "political will" and "results", in that they reflect recognition by society of the role and legitimacy of these organizations. The goal will depend on the history of women's organizations in each country.

Lastly, the inclusion of gender studies in the work of universities (training and research programmes) is an "indicator of political will". It shows that efforts are afoot to train women for leadership and to design policies and programmes of action that are specifically for women or have a gender aspect. The goal will be for all universities to have programmes of this kind.

Although the indicators selected for this report express levels of female participation – the "result" – and the political will to improve these, in future it will be necessary to construct indicators that look beyond the institutional arrangements made at the national, provincial or local levels and the regulations devised to promote gender equity, and that enable the effects of these arrangements and measures to be evaluated.

The indicators described below summarize a range of socio-political and cultural processes being experienced in the countries and in the region, as well as reflecting the democratic projects that are under way and the factors that restrain and assist progress towards fairer and more democratic societies. It is only within this interpretative framework that the indicators take on meaning, not only capturing the presence of women in individual areas and the existence of individual measures, but showing how women are emerging as socio-political actors and enabling us to take a comparative view of the region.

These results should be used as a basis for considering why women have attained higher levels of participation in some countries than in others, and for studying the peculiarities and obstacles that exist in countries where participation levels are relatively low. Research of this kind will enable factors associated with progress or failure to be identified.

C. THE INFORMATION PRESENTED

As has been noted, the process of selecting these indicators involved consideration of theoretical, methodological and practical aspects. The indicators proposed in the first stage of the study had to be refined, discarded or restructured, or a combination of these, taking account of the information available and standardizing it between countries so that an indicator meant the same thing in Barbados as in Nicaragua and Chile.

In this publication we have presented only data that meets the conditions of source reliability and broad comparability. For this reason we discarded some information, reduced the number of indicators presented, using those that had the most strategic value in terms of bringing the situation of women more clearly to light, and included tables in which only some countries appear. As will be appreciated, there are large gaps. Again, as historical information – i.e. data not just for the present but for previous periods as well – was obtained only very rarely, it was not possible to show how the different indicators had developed.

All that is provided here is a snapshot of the current situation, which cannot be interpreted in isolation. The female participation that these data reveal is taking place against different political backgrounds with divergent histories, with different electoral and party laws, and in the context of political modernization and decentralization reforms that are peculiar to each country. For this reason, substantive comparative research will be required to interpret them properly.

III. WOMEN'S ACCESS TO CITIZENSHIP

To understand and evaluate the current participation of women in public life, we need to look back at this century's history and identify the moment when the women of Latin America and the Caribbean were admitted to citizenship; in other words, when they obtained the right to vote. It is also pertinent to consider the extension of citizenship from the national sphere to that of the world, the acquisition of rights in international legislation, which occurred when the countries ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Although the history taught in the countries of the region systematically passes over the collective action of women, we now have access to chronicles and to pioneering and modern-day research that reveal a whole range of female experience in the field of social and political participation. These date back to the creation of the national States, and translate into growing assertiveness in different local and national spheres.

In this process, obtaining the vote was a crucial milestone. The vote opened the way to citizenship by giving women the political right to choose and be chosen in democratic elections. It was also a starting point for gender equity, and for this reason it was one of the main priorities of women's movements at the turn of the century. The struggle for female suffrage brought a wide variety of women together into a broad and diverse movement, although the path was not always smooth. Based on the ideas of European liberalism,

socialism and anarchism from the last century, and on the experience of European suffragette movements, the first women's movements opposed rules and practices that discriminated against them, the right to vote being one of their most important demands. Feminist leaders and free-thinking women from Europe travelled to the new world to spread emancipationist thinking. This led to the birth of organizations and groups that disseminated these ideas through women's meetings and magazines.

In at least four international women's congresses held in Latin America (Argentina in 1910, Chile in 1923, Peru in 1924 and Colombia in 1930), the right to vote was at the centre of the debate. Some of their leaders participated in the creation of the Inter-American Commission of Women, whose first conference was held in 1930 in Havana, Cuba. Suffragette groups were formed in almost all the countries, and women's parties were also created to lead the struggle in Argentina (1918), Brazil (1910), Cuba (1914), Chile (1922 and 1924) and Panama (1923). Their actions and their alliances with other political parties, assisted by the women's and feminist press and street protests and demonstrations, eventually led to women obtaining the right to vote.

In some countries, years of hard struggle – up to half a century in Chile and Mexico – were needed before parliamentarians and the Government accepted the demands of women. It was men that had to pass the relevant legislation or decree, and the inclusion of women awoke fears of various kinds in many of them, as it meant breaking with sexual segregation between public and private life and launching a process whose effects were impossible to foresee.

In some cases, women based their demand for voting rights on national constitutions that did not explicitly deny them. In Ecuador, the vote was granted to women without any collective action on their part, at the initiative of the President. In other countries, it was the action undertaken by the Inter-American Commission of Women and the United Nations that helped women to achieve citizenship. More than three decades would pass before Latin American and Caribbean women could vote en masse in presidential elections. The first country to grant women the right to vote was Ecuador, in 1929, and the last two were Bahamas and Paraguay, in 1961. In the 1930s women obtained this right in just three countries, Brazil, Cuba and Uruguay, while in the 1940s it was obtained in 11 countries. In the 1950s the figure was 18, and in the 1960s it was two.

Table 1

YEAR VOTE OBTAINED BY WOMEN
(in chronological order)

COUNTRY	YEAR
Ecuador	1929
Uruguay	1932
Brazil	1932
Cuba	1934
Dominican Republic	1942
Jamaica	1944
Guatemala	1946
Panama	1946
Trinidad and Tobago	1946
Argentina	1947
Aruba	1948
Surinam	1948
Chile	1949
Costa Rica	1949
British Virgin Islands	1950
El Salvador	1950
Haiti	1950
Antigua and Barbuda	1951
Barbados	1951
Dominica	1951
Grenada	1951
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1951
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1951
Saint Lucia	1951
Bolivia	1952
Guyana	1953
Mexico	1953
Belize	1954
Colombia	1954
Honduras	1955
Nicaragua	1955
Peru	1955
Bahamas	1961
Paraguay	1961

Sources: Teresa Valdés and Enrique Gómariz, *Mujeres latinoamericanas en cifras*, Santiago, Chile, Institute for Women's Studies, Spanish Ministry of Social Affairs and Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), 1995; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Aruba, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Bahamas, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bahamas, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Barbados, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women's Desk - Chief Minister's Office, British Virgin Islands, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Saint Lucia, 1998; Web page of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), [http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/suffrage.htm].

In the non-Spanish-speaking Caribbean, the first country to grant women the vote was Jamaica, and a large number of countries did not do so until the 1950s. In 1951, seven countries recognized this right.

In those countries that were under colonial government, women obtained the vote at the same time as in the mother country.

In Bahamas, Chile, Ecuador and Panama, women obtained partial citizenship. In some cases, they only had the right to vote in municipal elections, while in others they were able to vote but were not eligible to stand for elected positions. In other words, they had to acquire some experience before becoming full citizens. In the Dominican Republic, they had two voting "rehearsals" before obtaining real citizenship.

Other countries, on the other hand, initially restricted voting rights to women who owned a certain amount of property, while almost all of them imposed an educational requirement. Illiterate women had to wait, in some cases, until the 1980s before they could exercise citizenship. In a continent where a high percentage of the population is rural and indigenous, this marginalized millions of women. The requirement for voters to be registered on electoral rolls also made it very difficult to exercise the right that had been acquired.

At present, voting is a universal right in all the countries of the region and, except in Cuba and Nicaragua, where people can vote from the age of 16, young men and women obtain citizenship at the age of 18. In some countries voting is compulsory, examples being Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Uruguay. The obligation to vote is modified in some countries; in Brazil, for example, it is compulsory only between the ages of 18 and 70, while in other countries, such as Bolivia, married people have the right to vote from the age of 16. In some countries registration is voluntary. In others, such as Argentina, it is automatic once voting age is reached.

Nonetheless, it must be recalled that the ability of women to exercise their citizenship has been limited by the suspension or restriction of political rights decreed by the different military dictators and authoritarian Governments that have ravaged numerous countries in the region. Because of this, in some countries women have been able to exercise their right on only a few occasions. The redemocratization processes of the 1980s unquestionably provided a vital opportunity for women to experience democracy in practice. In Paraguay, women did not vote in contested elections until 1993.

Throughout the region, obtaining the vote marked a decisive step forward in the exercise of public decision-making by women. In the countries, the legislative debate on the subject led on to discussions about the inclusion of women in political life. This meant that the traditional view that women belonged exclusively to the private sphere and men to the public one had to be discarded.

The struggle for female citizenship did not end once the vote had been won, but continued over the years as women set their sights on winning economic and social rights. The 1970s and subsequent decades were fruitful in laying the groundwork for the extension of citizenship from the national to the international sphere, the latter being understood as a process that is continually being constructed and that is driven primarily by "the right to have rights" (Lefort, 1987 and Jelin, 1996).

As a result of the work done since 1946 by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, in December 1979 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, laying the foundations of new, internationally recognized rights for women. Once the countries had ratified this Convention, women could enforce compliance.

The Convention is based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and seeks to secure respect for equality of rights between women and men. It expresses the view that, despite improvements in the status of women, there are still situations of serious discrimination in the world. The Convention deems discrimination against women to be "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women (...) of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field" (United Nations, 1979a). It refers to political, civil, economic and social rights, to reproductive rights and to the impact of cultural factors and gender relations on human rights.

In the area of political rights, there is concern about the right to vote and to stand for decision-making positions, the aim being essentially to guarantee women's right of public representation. In respect of civil rights, the concern is for the legal status of married women, equality before the law and the family. In the case of economic and social rights, the focus is on education, employment discrimination, health, family services, access to credit and recreation and culture. Where reproductive rights are concerned, the emphasis

is on the right to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of children, access to information and education and the means of exercising them. Particular emphasis is placed on the situation of rural women.

The Convention also addresses the relationship between the reproductive role of women and discrimination. Reproduction is approached from the point of view not of family planning but of individual rights and freedom to make choices about sexuality and reproduction.

Lastly, it touches on the influence of culture and tradition as factors that can make it difficult for women to exercise rights. More or less institutionalized stereotypes, norms and customs mould the characteristics and attributes of gender relations; in particular, they have brought about a situation in which women are subordinated and undervalued, and have created roles and legal and social conditions that have placed women in a position of discrimination.

To ensure compliance, the Convention set up a committee of experts. This is composed of 23 women experts appointed by the countries on the basis of what are considered to be their moral qualities and technical competence in the areas covered by the Convention. Every four years or so the Governments have to submit a national report to the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which is responsible for following up the Convention, setting out the measures that have been implemented during the preceding period to put the principles of the Convention into effect.

The importance of this Convention lies in the fact that it places discrimination against women in the context of equity and respect for human rights from a gender standpoint, not just theoretically but in political terms as well, meaning that it proposes a strategic agenda for women's rights. In September 1981, when the number of countries to have ratified it rose to twenty, it acquired binding force for those countries. This means that the Convention is an international legal instrument which obliges the countries that have ratified it to draw up national agendas for the advancement of women and gender equity, and to ensure they are followed.

Table 2

YEAR OF RATIFICATION AND SIGNATURE OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN, BY DATE INSTRUMENT ACCEPTED, AS OF DECEMBER 1998

COUNTRY	YEAR
Barbados	1980
Cuba	1980
Dominica	1980
Guyana	1980
Ecuador	1981
El Salvador	1981
Haiti	1981
Mexico	1981
Nicaragua	1981
Panama	1981
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines [a]	1981
Uruguay	1981
Colombia	1982
Guatemala	1982
Peru	1982
Dominican Republic	1982
Honduras	1983
Saint Lucia	1983
Venezuela	1983
Brazil	1984
Jamaica	1984
Argentina	1985
Saint Kitts and Nevis [a]	1985
British Virgin Islands	1986
Costa Rica	1986
Paraguay [a]	1987
Antigua and Barbuda [a]	1989
Chile	1989
Belize	1990
Bolivia	1990
Grenada	1990
Trinidad and Tobago	1990
Netherlands Antilles [b]	1991
Aruba	1991
Bahamas [a]	1993
Surinam [a]	1993

a Ratification in the sense of acceptance or adherence.
b Dependency of the Netherlands.
Source: Web page of the United Nations, [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/ratifica.htm].

By 1998, 154 countries were party to this Convention, including all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. In the cases of Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Paraguay, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Surinam, ratification was carried out on the basis of agreement and acceptance. What this means is that although these countries agree with the general principles, they do not undertake to amend national laws and draw up plans accordingly. Eight countries have expressed reservations, meaning that although they have ratified the Convention, the States concerned do not accept certain articles which they deem to be detrimental to the independence of the country, be this for political, ideological, legal or cultural reasons. They are: Argentina, Bahamas, Brazil, Cuba, El Salvador, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela, and the reservations relate to all or part of article 29, which deals with the resolution of disputes between countries that are party to the Convention through the arbitration of the International Court of Justice. In the case of Bahamas, reservations were also entered for articles: 2(a), which makes it obligatory to incorporate equality between women and men into the Constitution and legislate to ensure that it is actually exercised; 9 paragraph 2, which guarantees the nationality of children for both men and women; and 16 paragraph 1(h), which establishes the equality of men and women when marrying.

As regards the composition of the CEDAW Committee, in 1998 it contained three representatives from Latin America and the Caribbean: Ecuador, Cuba and Mexico. The term of the representative from Ecuador expired that same year, whilst the terms of the others expire in 2000.

Ratification of the Convention is an indicator that reveals the political will of States to adhere to the international agenda for the attainment of gender equity. Nonetheless, there is a need to know what status it has in a country's legislation and the extent to which this has been adapted to the Convention. In some countries it has been turned into national law. In others, the approach taken has been to amend existing laws bit by bit. In federal countries, such as Brazil, there are variations between one state and another.

IV. WOMEN IN THE STATE

Accession to citizenship gave women the key to institutional politics in all the countries. Nonetheless, their entry into this sphere was not automatic, and there were considerable variations between the different countries and, within them, between different State authorities, depending on their political systems.

Women gained access to the executive level rather slowly and even tardily, if we compare the date they obtained the vote with that of the first appointment of a women as a minister or secretary of State. Since the 1970s some women in the region have temporarily held the highest office, but only in 1989 did a woman attain to the presidency of a country through democratic elections.

Women had already entered the legislature, but in very small numbers. Women had been incorporated into the judiciary earlier, however, as many had embarked on a judicial career when the right to vote was obtained. Despite this, access to supreme courts was denied them for many years, and still is in many countries of the region. This situation has changed thanks to the major reforms made to the judiciary in recent years. The Caribbean countries are the exception.

1. THE EXECUTIVE

The incorporation of women at the minister or secretary of State level began in Cuba, where a women minister (without portfolio) was appointed in 1948.

The next country in Latin America to take this step was Panama, which in 1950 appointed a woman as Minister of Labour, Social Welfare and Public Health, followed in 1952 by Chile, which appointed a women Minister of Justice. The last countries to bring a woman into the cabinet were Aruba, Bahamas and the British Virgin Islands, which did not do so until the 1990s.

Most of the ministries occupied by these pioneers were concerned with social affairs: education, health, labour and social welfare, justice. No woman was given the economic, finance, defence or foreign affairs portfolios, let alone any eminently political ministry. This reveals how the female role was extended from the private to the public sphere, a situation which has tended to change very slowly with time, although it is becoming more and more common for women to be appointed to the social ministries. As more women have come to occupy positions of responsibility, they have built up a critical mass which has helped them to penetrate other areas.

Most of the countries did not have their first woman cabinet member until the 1960s were over, years after women's citizenship had been established. This suggests that the cultural and social process whereby new roles for women and equality with men gained acceptance was a slow one.

The 1970s were a time of great cultural upheaval which opened the way to changes in gender relations. Not only were women raising their educational standards en masse and entering the labour market, albeit at different rates in different countries, but increasing access to modern contraceptives was enabling them to separate their sexuality from reproduction and control their fertility more efficiently. This enabled them to become more independent and exercise power in the private sphere.

Later on, the 1970s were a time when women gained a greater presence on the world stage with International Women's Year and the United Nations Decade for Women, the aim of which was to help bring them into the mainstream of development.

Table 3
**FIRST WOMAN TO BECOME A MINISTER OR SECRETARY OF STATE,
BY YEAR AND PORTFOLIO**
(selected countries)

COUNTRY	YEAR	PORTFOLIO
Cuba	1948	Without portfolio
Panama	1950	Labour, Social Welfare and Public Health
Chile	1952	Justice
Colombia	1954	Communications
Haiti	1957	Labour
Costa Rica	1958	Education
Guyana	1961	Ministry of Labour, Welfare, Social Security and Housing
Dominican R.	1963	Department of Education
Grenada	1967	Education and Social Services
Honduras	1967	Labour and Social Welfare
Bolivia	1968	Labour and Occupational Development
Uruguay	1968	Education
Venezuela	1968	Development
Saint Lucia	1974	Community Development, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs
Ecuador	1979	Social Welfare
Nicaragua	1979	Education
Mexico	1981	Tourism
Brazil	1982	Education
Guatemala	1983	Not specified
Peru	1987	Health and Education
Argentina	1989	Foreign Relations
Paraguay	1989	Public Health and Social Welfare
Aruba	1991	Plenipotentiary
Bahamas	1992	Minister of Social Services, National Insurance and Housing
British Virgin Islands	1995	Health, Education and Welfare

Sources: Teresa Valdés and Enrique Gómariz, Mujeres latinoamericanas en cifras, Santiago, Chile, Institute for Women's Studies, Spanish Ministry of Social Affairs and Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), 1995; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Aruba, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Bahamas, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Guyana, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Women's Rights and Status, Haiti, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women's Desk, Chief Minister's Office, British Virgin Islands, 1998; Report to ECLAC, General Department for the Advancement of Women, Dominican Republic, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Saint Lucia, 1998; Report to the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) by the Organization of American States (OAS) presented by Guyana at the Twenty-ninth Assembly of Delegates of IACW held in the Dominican Republic, 1998; Report to the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) by the Organization of American States (OAS) presented by Panama at the Twenty-ninth Assembly of Delegates of IACW held in the Dominican Republic, 1998.

The delay in bringing women into the executive in certain countries was probably due to political processes there, like the decolonization process that took place in Caribbean countries. When these were colonies, appointments were made by the prime minister and governor, who in turn were acting in accordance with events in Britain.

In most cases, the appointment of women – and men – as ministers or secretaries of State is bound up with their adherence to the political parties in government. Political parties thus control the access of women to this sphere of State power.

a) Presidency of the Republic

The countries of the region have different systems of government, which means that the organization, functions and powers of their leaders vary. The situation in the English- and French-speaking Caribbean is unlike that of the rest of Latin America, as the head of State is not the same person as the head of Government. Generally speaking, these countries were European colonies, and most of them keep to the same organization as they had before. The governor represented the European monarchy and was a representative of the mother country. No woman ever held this position. In these countries there is a governor and a prime minister, or a president and a prime minister, the latter in each case acting as head of the Government. Only Haiti and Guyana have had women Presidents; in Guyana, the person concerned became President after having been Prime Minister.

Women came very late to the highest office. Up until 1989 they occupied it only temporarily, at times of political crisis in their countries. In Argentina, after the death of President Juan Domingo Perón in 1974, his widow María Estela Martínez de Perón took over the presidency, having held the position of Vice-President. She held the presidency between 1974 and 1976, when she was overthrown by a military coup. Lidia Gueiler was President of Bolivia for eight months (November 1979 to July 1980), having been appointed by Parliament. She was also overthrown by a military coup. In 1989, Violeta Chamorro became the first woman to reach the presidency through democratic elections, in Nicaragua. During the 1990s, the highest office is or has been occupied by women in four countries: Haiti, Guyana, Ecuador and Panama. In March 1990, Judge Ertha Pascal-Trouillot took over the presidency of Haiti provisionally, the position having been resigned to her by General Abraham after a *coup d'état* which brought down General Prosper Avril. The new President undertook to create the conditions needed to apply the 1987

Constitution and to call presidential elections at the end of that same year. In Guyana, Janet Jagan took over the presidency in December 1997, having been the Prime Minister of the country up until that time.

Table 4

WOMEN PRESIDENTS, PRIME MINISTERS OR EQUIVALENT, YEAR OF OFFICE

COUNTRY	YEAR
Argentina	1974
Bolivia	1979
Nicaragua	1989
Haiti	1990
Ecuador	1996
Guyana	1998
Panama	1999

Sources: Teresa Valdés and Enrique Gómariz, Mujeres latinoamericanas en cifras, Santiago, Chile, Institute for Women's Studies, Spanish Ministry of Social Affairs and Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), 1995; Web page of Zárate's Political Collections, [http://web.jet.es/ziaorarr/ecuador.htm]; Web page of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), [http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/chiefs].

In Ecuador, Rosalía Arteaga held this office for just three days, with a mandate from the National Congress, in the midst of the crisis caused by the disqualification and removal of Abdalá Bucaram. Lastly, in Panama Mireya Moscoso was elected to the presidency in 1999. She was the widow of Arnulfo Arias of the ARENA party, which had a great popular following. As in the case of Violeta Chamorro, the political capital she enjoyed had been accumulated by her husband.

Only in the last few years have some political parties put women forward for the presidency, something they have traditionally been reluctant to do, regardless of their political leaning. The exception is Mexico, where Rosario Ibarra de Piedra stood for the highest office as long ago as 1976.

b) Vice-presidency

The situation as regards the position of vice-president of the republic is somewhat different. This is an office that exists only in some countries within the region. There have recently been female Vice-Presidents in four countries. In earlier decades there were other instances, such as that of María Estela Martínez de Perón, who won the vice-presidency by popular election in 1974.

The electoral processes of recent years reveal that political parties are increasingly disposed to offer a male candidate for the presidency and a female one for the vice-presidency. The importance of the vice-presidency in republican systems derives from the fact that vice-presidents stand in for the president when the latter is out of the country. They also carry out duties relating to the internal government of the country. Their role and origin are eminently political.

Table 5

**WOMEN VICE-PRESIDENTS OR EQUIVALENT,
LATEST YEAR AVAILABLE**

COUNTRY	YEAR	WOMEN
Costa Rica	1998	2
Ecuador	1997	1
Honduras	1997	1
Nicaragua	1995	1

Sources: Report to ECLAC, Costa Rican Women's Alliance, Costa Rica, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women and Society Foundation, Ecuador, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Nicaraguan National Women's Institute, Nicaragua, 1998; Web page of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), [http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/chiefs].

c) Ministries or departments of State

In ministries and departments of State the situation is quite varied at present. To take the countries for which full information was available, around 1999 women held between 7% and 20% of positions. Aruba and Ecuador stand out with female representation of around 30%, which is far above the average and approaches the goal of 50%. In Guyana the share of women is 5.2%, while in Brazil they hold less than 5% of portfolios (in the federal Government).

Table 6

WOMEN MINISTERS, SECRETARIES OF STATE OR EQUIVALENT, LATEST YEAR AVAILABLE
(ranked by percentages)

COUNTRY	YEAR	TOTAL	WOMEN	WOMEN AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
Aruba	1999	7	2	28.6
Ecuador	1999	14	4	28.5
Bahamas	1999	13	3	23.1
Panama	1999	13	3	23.1
Dominica	1997	9	2	22.2
Honduras	1999	17	3	17.6
Colombia	1999	18	3	16.6
Haiti	1999	18	3	16.6
Jamaica	1999	18	3	16.6
Chile	1998	19	3	15.8
Costa Rica	1999	14	2	14.2
Grenada	1999	14	2	14.2
Trinidad and Tobago	1997	22	3	13.6
Peru	1999	15	2	13.3
Barbados	1999	17	3	17.6
Mexico [a]	1998	17	2	11.8
Saint Lucia	1997	17	2	11.8
Dominican Republic	1999	17	2	11.7
Argentina [a]	1999	9	1	11.1
Paraguay	1999	10	1	11.1
Guatemala	1999	12	1	8.3
Uruguay	1999	12	1	8.3
Bolivia	1997	14	1	7.1
Cuba	1999	28	2	7.1
Venezuela [a]	1999	14	1	7.1
Guyana	1999	19	1	5.2
Brazil [a]	1999	24	1	4.1
Antigua and Barbuda	1999	15	0	0.0
El Salvador	1999	14	0	0.0
Nicaragua	1999	13	0	0.0
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1999	12	0	0.0
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1999	11	0	0.0
Surinam	1996	16	0	0.0
Netherlands Antilles	1997	...	4	...
Belize	1996	...	1	...
British Virgin Islands	1997	...	1	...

... No information available.

a National or Federal Executive.

Sources: Report to ECLAC, Netherlands Antilles, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Foreign Relations, International Trade and Worship, Argentina, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Aruba, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women's Information and Development Centre (CIDEM), Bolivia, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Costa Rican Women's Alliance, Costa Rica, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Dominica, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women and Society Foundation, Ecuador, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Guyana, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women's Desk - Chief Minister's Office, British Virgin Islands, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of Foreign Relations, International Women's Affairs, Mexico, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of Women, Presidency of the Republic, Paraguay, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Centre for Social Studies and Publications (CESIP), Peru, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Saint Lucia, 1998; Report to ECLAC, National Women's Council, Presidency of the Republic, Venezuela, 1998; Report to the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) of the Organization of American States (OAS) presented by Grenada at the Twenty-ninth Assembly of Delegates of IACW, held in the Dominican Republic, 1998; Report to the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) of the Organization of American States (OAS) presented by Honduras at the Twenty-ninth Assembly of Delegates of IACW, held in the Dominican Republic, 1998; Report to the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) of the Organization of American States (OAS) presented by Jamaica at the Twenty-ninth Assembly of Delegates of IACW, held in the Dominican Republic, 1998; Report to the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) of the Organization of American States (OAS) presented by Saint Lucia at the Twenty-ninth Assembly of Delegates of IACW, held in the Dominican Republic, 1998; Guía Silber, Santiago, Chile, 1998; Family Training and Research Centre, Panama (1999); Report to the Summit of the Americas, "El fortalecimiento del papel de la mujer en la sociedad", Nicaragua, undated; Web page of the Political Reference Almanac, [http://www.polisci.com/world/nation/BR.htm]; Web page of the Cabinet of the Government of the Republic of El Salvador, [http://tamagas.com/consalvamia/gabinete.htm]; Web page of the Government of the Dominican Republic, [http://www.presidencia.gov.do/secretarias.htm]; Web page of the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis, [http://www.stkittsnevis.net/directory.htm]; Web page of the Political Reference Almanac, [http://www.polisci.com/world/nation/TD.htm]; Web page of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), [http://www.odci.gov.cia/publications/chiefs].

In absolute terms, the countries with the greatest number of women ministers are Ecuador and the Netherlands Antilles, with four women in the cabinet, while there are no women in this position in Antigua and Barbuda, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Surinam or Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Nonetheless, these figures are unstable to differing degrees, as the political crises through which different countries in the region pass produce more or less frequent changes in cabinets.

The ministerial portfolios now held by women – excluding mechanisms for the advancement of women – are mainly in the social sphere (21), but a fair number of women do hold traditionally male portfolios: the economy (eight), the environment (four), the civil service (one) and foreign relations (one). The range of portfolios held by women has widened, but there are still some, such as defence and the interior, that no woman has ever held. In Jamaica there is a woman minister without a specific portfolio.

The number of women ministers of State fluctuates over time. No particular tendency can be discerned in the countries. To a great degree, this is due to the fact that these positions are allocated by the President, and consequently depend on the political parties that support him, although in some countries the appointments are made by the legislature.

No strong relationship with the political orientation of the parties in power can be identified. Thus, for example, countries without female representation at this level are no more or less likely to have conservative Governments than social democratic ones.

Table 7

MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIOS AND DEPARTMENTS OF STATE HELD BY WOMEN, AROUND 1997
(selected countries)

COUNTRY	PORTFOLIO									
	Economy a	Foreign Relations	Civil Service	Labour b	Education c	Health d	Women e	Justice f	Environment g	without portfolio
Argentina					E					
Aruba	E			E						
Bahamas		E		E		E				
Barbados					E	E			E	
Brazil			E							
Colombia	E				E E					
Chile							E	E	E	
Dominica						E	E			
Ecuador	E E				E				E	
Grenada						E	E			
Guatemala					E					
Guyana				E						
Haiti				E			E	E		
Honduras	E			E					E	
Jamaica	E			E						
Panama								E		
Peru	E						E			
Trinidad and Tobago					E E					
Uruguay				E						
Total	7	1	1	7	8	4	5	3	4	1

a Includes foreign trade, finance, credit, industry, trade integration and tourism.
b Includes labour and related areas (education, training, social security, social affairs, social welfare and sport).
c Includes education and related areas (culture, community development, sports and youth affairs).
d Includes health and related areas (environment and social services).
e Includes women's affairs and related areas (human and community development, housing and social security).
f Includes justice and related areas (public safety and government).
g Includes natural resources, national goods, housing and territory.
E Ministerial portfolios held by women.
Sources: Web page of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), [http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/chiefs]; [http://www.bahamas.net.bs/government/gov4.html].

d) Deputy ministers or under-secretaries of State

The task of under-secretaries or deputy ministers is generally to support those who hold the portfolios concerned, and their role is mainly administrative by contrast with the political role of ministers and secretaries of State. They too are political appointees of the head of State and they are of more or less importance depending on how each State is organized. There are countries where they are in charge of a whole sector (education or health, for example) and occupy a high place in the hierarchy. This is the case in countries that have mega-ministries containing a number of departments and sub-departments that are subordinate to them, examples being Bolivia and Mexico.

Women tend to be slightly better represented in these positions than at ministerial level. The situation varies greatly between countries, however. Whereas in Haiti the proportion of women is as high as 60%, in excess of the target, in Ecuador, a country with above-average representation at ministerial level, it is only 2.9%. In absolute terms, the countries that stand out are Bahamas, Bolivia, Cuba, Costa Rica and Mexico.

e) Ambassadors

In general, Governments have been slow to appoint women to official diplomatic posts. Furthermore, most countries do not record this information and little importance has been attached to this form of participation. In some cases women enter via a diplomatic career, although their numbers are very small, while in others appointment is political and they are chosen directly by Governments.

Table 8

WOMEN DEPUTY MINISTERS, UNDER-SECRETARIES OR
 EQUIVALENT, AROUND 1997
(selected countries, ranked by percentages)

COUNTRY	YEAR	TOTAL	WOMEN	WOMEN AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
Haiti	1997	5	3	60.0
Costa Rica	1998	18	7	38.9
Grenada	1996	...	...	23.1
Argentina a	1996	9	2	22.2
Guatemala	1996	...	...	22.2
El Salvador	1997	15	3	20.0
Dominican Republic	1997	...	...	18.0
Chile	1998	21	3	14.3
Peru	1998	22	3	13.6
Bolivia	1997	47	6	12.8
Cuba	1998	132	13	9.8
Jamaica	1998	11	1	9.1
Panama	1997	12	1	8.3
Uruguay	1997	13	1	7.7
Paraguay	1993	28	2	7.1
Mexico a	1998	134	9	6.7
Venezuela a	1998	21	1	4.8
Colombia	1997	23	1	4.3
Ecuador	1998	34	1	2.9
Bahamas	1996	...	9	...
Barbados	1996	...	1	...
British Virgin Islands	1997	...	1	...
Dominica	1997	...	1	...
Honduras	1997	...	2	...
Cayman Islands	1997	...	2	...
Nicaragua	1998	...	3	...
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1997	...	4	...

... No information available.

a National or Federal Executive.

Sources: Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Foreign Relations, International Trade and Worship, Argentina, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women's Information and Development Centre (CIDEM), Bolivia, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Costa Rican Women's Alliance, Costa Rica, 1998; Report to ECLAC, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Cuba, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Dominica, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women and Society Foundation, Ecuador, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women's Affairs and Social Security, Ministry of Housing, Grenada, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Women's Rights and Status, Haiti, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women's Desk - Chief Minister's Office, British Virgin Islands, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Jamaica, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of Foreign Relations, International Women's Affairs, Mexico,

1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Youth, Women, Childhood and the Family, Panama, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of Women, Presidency of the Republic, Paraguay, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Centre for Social Studies and Publications (CESIP), Peru, 1998; Report to ECLAC, General Department for the Advancement of Women, Dominican Republic, 1998; Report to ECLAC, National Women's Council, Presidency of the Republic, Venezuela, 1998; Report to the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) of the Organization of American States (OAS) presented by Grenada at the Twenty-ninth Assembly of Delegates of IACW, held in the Dominican Republic, 1998; Guía Silber, Chile, 1998; Report to the Summit of the Americas, "El fortalecimiento del papel de la mujer en la sociedad", Nicaragua, undated; Web page of the United Nations, [http://gopher.un.org:70/00/sec/dpcsd/daw/womgovt/factsheet /PERCENT.EN].

Among the few countries for which full and up-to-date figures were obtained, the highest percentages are found in Venezuela with 23.7%, Bolivia with 18.2% and Peru with 15.3%. Argentina is in a special situation, as current legislation allows ambassadors to be appointed for tasks other than representation in other countries or international bodies. Women hold 52.3% of ambassadorships. Almost all the countries for which information was obtained are a long way from the target of 50% of posts. The importance of having women in these positions lies in the fact that they are representing their Government beyond its borders. In a context of globalization, this means women participating in regional, hemispheric and global decision-making.

It should also be noted that in some countries, ministries of foreign relations have put forward women to represent the country in multilateral organizations with respect to both general and women's affairs, and have set up special units internally to deal with these issues in an international context. This is the case in Argentina, Mexico, the Netherlands Antilles and Peru, among others (ECLAC, 1998a).

f) Governors

In countries whose political and administrative organization is federal, male and female governors are chosen by popular election. Governorships are run by state legislation, they have their own funds and they are responsible for the political management of the state or province. They also devise and implement social policies and programmes.

Things are not done in the same way in unitary countries like Chile, where the position of provincial governor does indeed exist, but where governors have fewer powers and are appointed by the President of the republic.

Table 9

WOMEN AMBASSADORS IN OFFICIAL DIPLOMATIC POSITIONS, AROUND 1997
(selected countries)

COUNTRY	YEAR	TOTAL	WOMEN	WOMEN AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
Argentina a	1998	197	103	52.3
Venezuela	1998	139	33	23.7
Bolivia	1993	11	2	18.2
Peru	1998	59	9	15.3
Mexico	1997	134	12	8.9
Chile	1998	72	4	5.5
Paraguay	1998	125	1	0.8
El Salvador	1998	28	0	0.0
Uruguay	1998	20	0	0.0

a Includes women ambassadors covered by article 5 who are not career diplomats.
Sources: Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Foreign Relations, International Trade and Worship, Argentina, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women's Information and Development Centre (CIDEM), Bolivia, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of Foreign Relations, International Women's Affairs, Mexico, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of Women, Presidency of the Republic, Paraguay, 1998; Report to ECLAC, National Women's Council, Presidency of the Republic, Venezuela, 1998; Guía Silber, Chile, 1998; Ministry for Women's Affairs and Human Development (PROMUDEH), Informe sobre los avances en la implementación de la Plataforma de Acción de la IV Conferencia de la Mujer, Lima, 1998; National Follow-up Commission for the Beijing Agreements, El Estado uruguayo y las mujeres, Montevideo, Editorial Cotidiano Mujer, 1999; Web page of the Cabinet of the Republic of El Salvador, [http://tamagas.com/consalvamia/gabinete.htm].

Table 10

WOMEN GOVERNORS IN FEDERAL COUNTRIES, 1990s

COUNTRY	YEAR	GOVERNORS		
		TOTAL	WOMEN	WOMEN AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
Brazil	1998	24	1	4.2
Mexico a	1999	31	0	0.0
Argentina	1996	24	0	0.0
Venezuela	1998	23	0	0.0

In federal countries female representation in governorships is virtually nil. Only Brazil had a female governor in 1998, while Mexico, Venezuela and Argentina had none. At present, Graciela Fernández Meijide is standing for the governorship of Buenos Aires, and has a chance of winning.

g) Women mayors

Major municipal reforms have been undertaken in most of the countries in the region, including the democratization of local government. As a result of this, mayors, prefects, intendants or municipal presidents are now elected by popular vote and have more resources and scope for running their territory. Municipalities are the closest contact that citizens have with the State. They have been described as a particularly favourable environment for women to act in, as they are closely linked to the day-to-day life of the community.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, there are large variations in the size of municipalities, in terms both of territory and population, and in the importance of the position. At one extreme there is the example of Luiza Erundina, who was the prefect of Sao Paulo, a city of nine million inhabitants. Her situation is not comparable with that of women mayors in municipalities whose population is no more than a few hundred or a few thousand people.

There is now a wide range of situations in the countries of the region. Proportionately, women are more likely to be mayors (or the equivalent) than to hold executive office nationally, but in most cases the target of 50% is a long way from being met. Bahamas, Dominica, Guyana, Nicaragua and Trinidad and Tobago, countries in the English-speaking Caribbean and Central America, have the highest percentages, ranging from 20% to 37%, while in 11 countries, most of them in Latin America, fewer than 5% of mayors are women. In Ecuador, Saint Lucia and Uruguay no woman holds this position. In Honduras, Jamaica and Panama the figure is somewhat over 10%.

The decentralization process has brought with it an increase in resources at this level, as well as in public visibility and political interest. As a result, these positions have become attractive to political parties, and to men, and are increasingly sought after by them. This is raising the level of political competition and displacing women.

Although many women are engaged in local work, the number of women mayors is insufficient. In only two countries do they hold over 25% of these positions, which is half of the goal. In view of this situation, in recent years a number of countries have passed affirmative action laws – quota laws – to assist women at the municipal level, and these are beginning to produce results in Brazil and Peru.

In a number of countries women mayors have set up coordination networks and agencies, held international forums of a regional nature and established mechanisms and organizational structures to make their work more effective, an example being the initiatives of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA). The meetings held have been for the purpose of discussing and combining conceptual and practical considerations in order to bring women and the gender aspect into local administration and to offset the difficulties and inexperience that affect many women when they take up their municipal duties.

h) National mechanisms for the advancement of women

Perhaps the most significant breakthrough for women in the executive has been the creation of government bodies specializing in the formulation of public policies for the advancement of women, something that indicates political will on the part of Governments. In order to give effect to the requirements included in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have brought into operation governmental mechanisms for the advancement of women. These are the State bodies responsible for promoting gender equity in the countries. At present, the exception is Montserrat, which for these purposes only has a focal point that comes under the Ministry of Education, Health and Community Services. The country is considering setting up its first gender desk in the near future.

The powers, objectives, management procedures, rules, institutional legitimacy, position in the structure of government, funding, human resources and social positioning of these mechanisms varies from one country to another. Again, in a large part of the region they

have undergone numerous alterations and restructuring exercises over time, particularly during changes of government and the economic and political crises that many of them have experienced.

Table 11

WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: WOMEN MAYORS, LATEST YEAR AVAILABLE
(selected countries, ranked by percentages)

COUNTRY	YEAR	TOTAL MUNI	WOMEN	WOMEN AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL	TITLE
Guyana	1998	27	8	29.6	Mayor
Dominica	1998	30	8	26.7	Local officials
Bahamas	1997	764	175	22.9	...
Nicaragua	1996	145	30	20.7	Mayor
Trinidad and Tobago	1995	108	22	20.4	Town Councillor
Panama	1999	73	10	13.7	Mayor
Honduras	1994	291	37	12.7	Mayor
Jamaica	1998	16	2	12.5	Mayor
Chile	1997	341	32	9.4	Mayor
El Salvador	1998	...	...	8.4	Mayor
Venezuela	1998	330	22	6.7	Mayor
Cuba	1998	169	9	5.3	Pdte As. Municip
Costa Rica b	1998	81	4	4.9	Municipal Executive
Colombia	1998	...	...	4.7	Mayor
Bolivia	1997	311	12	3.9	Mayor
Haiti	1995	132	5	3.8	Mayor
Argentina	1992	1,100	40	3.6	Intendant
Peru	1998	194	7	3.6	Provincial Mayor
Brazil	1997	5,378	190	3.5	Prefect
Mexico	1998	2,418	79	3.3	Municipal President
Paraguay	1996	220	6	2.7	Intendant
Dominic. Rep.	1998	115	2	1.7	Syndic
Guatemala	1994	330	4	1.2	Mayor
Ecuador	1997	27	0	0.0	Mayor
Uruguay a	1998	19	0	0.0	Intendant
Saint Lucia	1997	1	0	0.0	Municipal President

... No information available.
a Includes 18 departments and Montevideo.
b Proprietary syndics.
Sources: Teresa Valdés and Enrique Gómariz, Mujeres latinoamericanas en cifras, Santiago, Chile, Institute for Women's Studies, Spanish Ministry of Social Affairs and Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), 1995; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Bahamas, 1998; Report to ECLAC,

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bahamas, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women's Information and Development Centre (CIDEM), Bolivia, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Chamber of Deputies, Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Electoral Service, Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of the Interior, Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Judiciary, Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, National Women's Service (SERNAM), Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Costa Rican Women's Alliance, Costa Rica, 1998; Report to ECLAC, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Cuba, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Dominica, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women and Society Foundation, Ecuador, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Guyana, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Women's Rights and Status, Haiti, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Jamaica, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of Foreign Relations, International Women's Affairs, Mexico, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Nicaraguan National Women's Institute, Nicaragua, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of Women, Presidency of the Republic, Paraguay, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Centre for Social Studies and Publications (CESIP), Peru, 1998; Report to ECLAC, General Department for the Advancement of Women, Dominican Republic, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Saint Lucia, 1998; Report to ECLAC, National Women's Council, Presidency of the Republic, Venezuela; Report to the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) of the Organization of American States (OAS) presented by Colombia at the Twenty-ninth Assembly of Delegates of IACW, held in the Dominican Republic, 1998; Report to the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) of the Organization of American States (OAS) presented by El Salvador at the Twenty-ninth Assembly of Delegates of IACW, held in the Dominican Republic, 1998; Report to the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) of the Organization of American States (OAS) presented by Trinidad and Tobago at the Twenty-ninth Assembly of Delegates of IACW, held in the Dominican Republic, 1998; National Follow-up Commission for the Beijing Agreements, El Estado uruguayo y las mujeres, Montevideo, Editorial Cotidiano Mujer, 1999; Family Training and Research Centre (CEFA), Agenda política de las Mujeres, Panama, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and National Women's Department, Ministry of Youth, Women, Childhood and the Family, 1999.

Most of the specialist bodies in operation today were set up between 1980 and 1990. Some were created earlier, but had their internal organization, objectives, powers and resources restructured between the 1980s and 1990s. Generally speaking, the existence of these national mechanisms is linked with the need of States to reform and modernize the government machinery in order to develop policies that meet current demands with greater efficiency and effectiveness. Behind this lies an idea of the State as an agent of concertation for the production and perpetuation of an equitable gender order (ECLAC, 1998b). The functions of these mechanisms include coordinating, monitoring, advising on and implementing public policies aimed at women.

One important aspect worth analysing is the position of these bodies in the structure of government; specifically, the authority they come under. In six countries they have the rank of ministry: Costa Rica, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Peru and Paraguay. In Chile, notwithstanding that it has this rank and is financially and administratively independent, the mechanism comes under the Ministry of Planning and Cooperation.

In most of the countries these mechanisms are administrations or departments, which means they have a lower status, less funding and less scope for coordinating policies

among government agencies further up the hierarchy. Although some come under the presidency, most report to ministries and sub-ministries.

The ministries that the mechanisms come under are generally concerned with social welfare, labour, "vulnerable groups" or education. In other words they are social ministries, which implies a particular approach to the role of these bodies and to the status and situation of women. This hierarchy illustrates the level of authority and autonomy that these mechanisms have within government and the amount of resources available to them. Thus, the budgets of departments, administrations and offices have to be renewed annually and are smaller or less stable than those of councils, institutes or ministries.

Again, the management models of national mechanisms vary. Anguilla, Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico and Venezuela have set up national commissions and councils which come under the presidency, except in Brazil where the mechanism comes under the Ministry of Justice. This model is found in federal countries, as it provides more flexible management and permits of closer links with organizations in civil society and other actors. In some Central American countries women's institutes have been set up (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua). They are not generally independent, the exception being that of Costa Rica.

In Cuba and Puerto Rico the situation is different. While the latter has a governmental Women's Affairs Commission, in Cuba the Federation of Cuban Women performs the role of a governmental mechanism for the advancement of women. It is a non-governmental organization that has a wide membership among Cuban women and is recognized by the constitution.

Another important characteristic is the number of staff, which is indicative of the real management capabilities of each mechanism. Thus, for example, whereas the mechanisms of Argentina, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Paraguay and Peru have more than 50 staff, those of Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Brazil, Guatemala, Guyana, Jamaica, the Netherlands Antilles, Puerto Rico, Surinam and Uruguay have less than five permanent staff and in Montserrat there is just one person to operate the mechanism.

The legal provisions on which these mechanisms are based are indicative of different degrees of legitimacy and acceptance. Thus, a presidential order is different from a law approved by parliament or a constitutional provision. In many of the countries the legal

mandate for these mechanisms is fragile, as they owe their existence to a decision by the executive and are not incorporated into national legislation. This has serious consequences for the relationship between the mechanisms and the demands and needs of women and women's organizations. All these different factors give an idea of the diversity of situations and the degree of political will that Governments bring to the task of incorporating the international gender equity agenda into their institutional structures.

Table 12

NATIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

COUNTRY	SET UP	NAME	AUTHORITY IT COMES UNDER
Anguilla	...	National Women's Council	...
Antigua and Barbuda	1994	Directorate of Women's Affairs	Prime Minister's Ministry
Argentina	1992	National Women's Council (CONAMU)	Presidency of the Republic
Aruba	1996	Bureau of Women's Affairs	Department of Social Affairs
Bahamas	1995	Bureau of Women's Affairs	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Barbados	1976	Bureau of Women's Affairs	Ministry of Labour, Community Development and Sports
Belize	1993	Department of Women's Affairs	Ministry of Human Resources, Youth, Women and Culture
Bolivia	1993	General Department for Gender Affairs	Office of the Under-Secretary of Gender Issues, Generational Affairs and Family
British Virgin Islands	1991	Women's Desk	Chief Minister's Office
Brazil	1995	National Council for the Rights of Women	Ministry of Justice
Cayman Islands	1995	Office for Women's Affairs	Ministry of Community Development, Sports, Women's Affairs, Youth and Culture
Chile	1991	National Women's Service (SERNAM)	Presidency of the Republic through the Ministry of Planning
Colombia	1999	Presidential Commission for Women's Equity	Presidency of the Republic
Costa Rica	1998	National Institute for Women	Government council
Cuba a	1960	Federation of Cuban Women	Independent
Dominica	1980	Women's Bureau	Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs
Dominican Republic	1982	General Department for the Advancement of Women	Department of the Presidency
Ecuador	1997	National Council for Women (CONAMU)	Presidency of the Republic

Continuation Table 12

El Salvador	1996	Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women	Ministry of the Presidency
Grenada	1997	Division of Women's Affairs	Ministry of Housing, Social Security and Women's Affairs
Guatemala	1981	National Office of Women's Affairs (ONAM)	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
Guyana	1991	Women's Affairs Bureau	Ministry of Labour, Human Services, Social Security and Housing
Haiti	1994	Ministry of Women's Rights and Status	Presidency of the Republic
Honduras	1999	National Women's Institute	Presidency of the Republic
Jamaica	1976	Bureau of Women's Affairs	Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Sport
Mexico	1998	National Commission on Women (CONMUJER)	Ministry of the Interior
Montserrat	1993	Focal Point for Women's Affairs	Ministry of Education, Health and Community Services
Netherlands Antilles	1995	Department of Welfare, Family and Humanitarian Affairs	Ministry of Welfare, Family and Humanitarian Affairs
Nicaragua	1987	Nicaraguan Women's Institute (INIM)	Ministry of the Family
Panama	1998	National Directorate of Women's Affairs	Ministry of Youth, Women, Childhood and the Family
Paraguay	1992	Department of Women's Affairs	Presidency of the Republic
Peru	1996	Ministry for Women's Affairs and Human Development	Presidency of the Republic
Puerto Rico	1994	Women's Affairs Commission	Governor's office
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1995	Director of Women's Affairs	Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs
Saint Lucia	1997	Division of Women's Affairs	Ministry of Health, Human Services, Family Affairs and Women
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1985	Women's Affairs Department	Ministry of Education, Youth and Women's Affairs and Culture.
Surinam	...	National Gender Bureau	Ministry of Home Affairs
Trinidad and Tobago	1993	Division of Gender Affairs	Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs
Uruguay	1992	National Institute for Family and Women's Affairs	Ministry of Education and Culture
Venezuela	1992	National Women's Council (CONAMU)	Presidency of the Republic

... No information available.

a The Cuban State has granted the status of a national mechanism for the advancement of women to the Federation of Cuban Women, a non-governmental organization recognized by the Economic and Social Council as a special category organization.

Source: ECLAC "Directory of national organizations dealing with programmes and policies on women in Latin America and the Caribbean", (LC/L.1065/Rev. 1), Santiago, Chile, 1998, and updated version on ECLAC Web page, [http://www.eclac.cl/espanol/investigacion/series/mujer/directorio/directorioorg.htm].

i) Governmental instruments for equal opportunities between women and men

In the light of the experience of the Nordic countries with equal rights laws and of Spain with its Equal Opportunities Plan, some countries in the region have formulated equal opportunities plans of their own. These are national instruments for attaining gender equity and the advancement of women, being a synthesis of government policy in this area. Consequently, as well as incorporating general elements and regulations, they provide for specific measures and programmes to be implemented in the country. Adoption of such plans is an indicator of political will. Application is generally coordinated by the governmental women's organization, but in most cases the different bodies are supposed to take their own measures, so that what is envisaged is coordinated action of an interministerial or intersectoral nature. With the exception of Chile and Argentina, all the countries that have instruments of this type have designed and implemented them since the last World Conference on Women. They owe their existence to one of the agreements in the Platform that resulted from that event.

Almost all of them are called national plans of action or equal opportunities plans. Once objectives and aims have been set to give them shape, measures can be taken to achieve equality and instruments for monitoring progress can be developed. They are almost invariably broad five-year plans designed to allow for ongoing evaluation of changes in the position of women and in the gender equity situation as they proceed. Whether they are implemented successfully or not depends on the strength and legitimacy of the governmental mechanisms in charge of them, in terms both of presidential support and their ability to negotiate and establish alliances with other sectors of government and with non-State actors, both nationally and internationally.

Although the policies developed up until now have identified groups of women as beneficiaries of or participants in social plans and programmes, they create a new logic or perspective within the State. Furthermore, they make it possible to quantify the resources committed to these measures, as they are subject to budgetary debate.

These plans of action deal with different situations relating to women and the attainment of equality. Given the levels of poverty found in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, however, rather than being general policies aimed at all women they concentrate on the groups that are most vulnerable, whether because they are in a situation of poverty or for cultural or psychosocial reasons. Thus, in Chile, Costa Rica and other countries, they are directly linked with the programme or programmes to combat poverty and with the procedures used to target social spending.

Although this criterion is reasonable, there is a need to carry out assessments to determine whether the goal of overcoming gender obstacles is not being lost in the struggle to defeat poverty.

Another important factor that needs to be taken into account is the multiplicity of actors involved in them. In the English-speaking Caribbean, design and implementation of these plans is closely tied to the activities of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which means that they constitute strategies of a subregional type. In many Latin American countries, design and implementation does not involve the active participation of non-governmental organizations or organizations in civil society, even though these are viewed as technical consultative bodies by the United Nations system.

Nonetheless, in Brazil, the Dominican Republic and Mexico the presence of women's movements has resulted in social participation in the formulation of proposals, in the design of the plan concerned or in its execution or evaluation, or a combination of these.

Looking beyond the political will of which these plans are a manifestation, result indicators will have to be used in future to assess their impact.

j) Other national mechanisms

Besides the Government agencies directly responsible for public policies aimed at women, in a number of countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Granada, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago) interministerial committees or ministerial commissions, or both types of mechanisms, have been created within central Government to deal with specific problems on a sectoral or intersectoral basis. In the case of intersectoral agencies, these are generally coordinated by a national mechanism authority or by the office of the presidency.

Some countries, such as Argentina, Costa Rica and Mexico, have also set up special national commissions to follow up and monitor sectoral agreements relating to education, health, labour, housing, agriculture and protection for the rights of girls and women (UNICEF/FLACSO, 1998a). In federal countries there are independent state mechanisms for the advancement of women as well, and these are also very important. This is the case with Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Venezuela. In Guyana there are also a number of

regional mechanisms. Besides this, there are municipal offices with responsibility for women's affairs in a number of Latin American countries, examples being Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela. The existence of these other agencies shows that there is increased awareness of the problems of women and gender equity, and more political will to deal with them comprehensively. The effects of their work will also need to be evaluated in future.

Table 13

INSTRUMENTS FOR ACHIEVING EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN

COUNTRY	NAME	DATE	ORGANIZATION RESPONSIBLE
Antigua and Barbuda	Plan of Action for gender and development	1998-2000	Division of Gender Affairs
Argentina	Federal Plan for Women	1999	National Women's Council
Bahamas	National Plan of Action	...	...
Barbados	National Plan of Action	...	...
Belize	National Plan of Action (in preparation)	...	...
Bolivia	Supreme Decree for Equality of Opportunities between Bolivian Men and Women	1997	Ministry of Sustainable Development and Planning
Brazil	Strategies for equality	1995-1999	...
British Virgin Islands	National Plan of Action	...	...
Chile	Equal Opportunity Plan for Women	1994-1999	National Women's Service (SERNAM)
Colombia	Policy of Participation and Equity for Women	1994	National Directorate for Women's Equity
Costa Rica	Third Plan for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (PIOMH)	1997-2001	National Centre for the Development of Women and the Family
	Addendum to PIOMH for the Agricultural and Environmental Sectors	1997	National Centre for the Development of Women and the Family
Cuba	National Plan of Action to Follow up the Fourth World Conference of the United Nations	1997	...
Dominica	National Plan to improve the situation of women (under review)	1989	...
Dominican Rep.	National Platform for the advancement of Dominican women	1995-2001	General Department for the Advancement of Women

Continuation Table 13

Ecuador	Policies for women	1996-2005	National Council for Women
El Salvador	National Policy for Women	1997-1999	Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women
Grenada	National Plan of Action (in preparation)	...	...
Guatemala	National policy for the development and advancement of women	1997	...
Guyana	National Policy for Women	1996	National Commission for Women
Haiti	National Plan of Action	1996	...
Honduras	Government Plan	...	...
Jamaica	National Plan of Action for women	1997-2000	Bureau of Women's Affairs
Mexico	National Women's Programme	1995-2000	General Liaison Office for the National Women's Programme
Nicaragua	National Women's Plan	1994-1996	Nicaraguan Women's Institute
Panama	National Women and Development Plan	1994-2000	National Women's Department
Paraguay	National Equal Opportunities Plan for Women	1997-2001	Department of Women's Affairs. Presidency of the Republic
Peru	National Women and Development Plan	1998-2000	PROMUDEH
Saint Kitts and Nevis	National Plan of Action on Women		
Saint Lucia	National Plan of Action	...	...
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	National Plan of Action	...	...
Trinidad and Tobago	National Plan of Action	...	...
Uruguay	Plan of Action of the National Institute for Family and Women's Affairs	...	National Institute for Family and Women's Affairs
Venezuela	National Women's Plan	1998-2003	National Women's Council

... No information available.

Sources: ECLAC, "Directory of national organizations dealing with programmes and policies on women in Latin America and the Caribbean", (LC/L.1065/Rev.1), Santiago, Chile, 1998 and updated version on ECLAC Web page, [http://www.eclac.cl./espyearl/investigación/series/mujer/directorio/directorwor.htm]; Report to ECLAC, Women's Information and Development Centre (CIDEM), Bolivia, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Costa Rican Women's Alliance, Costa Rica, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of Foreign Relations, International Women's Affairs, Mexico, 1998; Report to the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) of the Organization of American States (OAS) presented by Antigua and Barbuda at the Twenty-ninth Assembly of Delegates of IACW, held in the Dominican Republic, 1998; Report to the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) of the Organization of American States (OAS) presented by Guyana at the Twenty-ninth Assembly of Delegates of IACW, held in the Dominican Republic, 1998; Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), Mapping Progress: Assessing Implementation of the Beijing Platform, New York, 1998.

k) Mechanisms for following up the Beijing agreements

The chief purpose of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) was to produce a Platform for Action aimed at removing the obstacles that prevent women from participating actively in all areas of the life of society, to promote equality between women and men in decision-making processes, and to protect their human rights. This Platform for Action is not legally binding, but presupposes political will on the part of Governments. In other words, these are not obliged to honour it, so implementation and oversight depend on the commitment they bring to it and on the ability of civil society, and women's organizations in particular, to exert pressure.

At the national level, responsibility for application and follow-up was vested by Governments in their national mechanisms for the advancement of women. Some countries, however, created specific commissions, working plans and institutional instruments to implement and follow up the agreements included in the Platform. These come under the national body or are interministerial (Argentina, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela). The procedures, objectives and resources of these special mechanisms vary from one country to another. Generally speaking, though, their aim is rather to get action under way than to carry out systematic and regular follow-up and oversight activities.

Bolivia and Paraguay are in a special position, as their agencies have a bipartite and tripartite character, i.e. they include, alongside the Government, the relevant non-governmental organizations and international bodies. In other countries too links have been forged between the State and civil society, but not on such a permanent basis (Barbados, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Guyana and Paraguay). The intensity of these relationships varies considerably. Thus, while there are monthly meetings in some countries, in others there has only been one meeting every year or two years, and whereas in some cases these meetings are purely consultative, in others they can have a real influence (UNICEF/ FLACSO, 1998b). Although the creation of these agencies is indicative of political will, we need to know who they report to and what impact they have on progress.

The fact is that it is the non-governmental world of the women's movement that is taking the lead in following up and monitoring the commitments entered into. In some countries the women's movement has set up independent agencies to monitor compliance with the Beijing agreements. At least, this is the case in Chile and Uruguay. In Chile there is no institutionalized agency to carry out this task within the Government, apart from the activities conducted by

the National Women's Service with the Equal Opportunity Plan for Women, which has some overlap with the Platform for Action. On the other hand there is the Chile Initiative Group, which is composed of 11 non-governmental organizations and women's study centres, and whose main purpose is to carry out citizen monitoring of the Beijing agreements.

Table 14

SPECIAL STATE MECHANISMS FOR FOLLOWING UP BEIJING

COUNTRY	YEAR ESTABLISHED	FOLLOW-UP MECHANISM
Antigua and Barbuda	...	National Commission for Women
Argentina	1995	Ad hoc commission to follow up the Plan of Action resulting from the Fourth World Conference on Women
Barbados	...	National Commission for Women
Belize	...	National Commission for Women
Bolivia	1997	National Post-Beijing Liaison Committee
Brazil	...	National Commission for implementation of the Beijing Platform [a]
Br. Virgin Islands	...	National Commission for Women
Costa Rica	...	Commission of the Social Council
Dominica	...	National Commission for Women
Dominican Rep.	1995	National Follow-up Commission for the Plan of Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women
Grenada	…	National Commission for Women
Guyana	..	National Beijing Committee
Jamaica	...	Intersectoral Group
Mexico	1996	General Liaison Office for the National Women's Programme/Consultative Council/Social Comptroller's Office
Paraguay	...	Tripartite commission for monitoring, evaluating and following up the Beijing Platform (State-civil society, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP))
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	...	Commission on the status of women
Surinam	...	Government advisory board
Trinidad and Tobago	1997	Report of Trinidad and Tobago regarding application of the Beijing Platform for Action
Uruguay	1997	Commission responsible for making proposals and following up the agreements entered into in Beijing
Venezuela	1996	National Post-Beijing Commission

... No information available.

a Comes under the legislature.

Sources: Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Foreign Relations, International Trade and Worship, Argentina, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Aruba, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Barbados, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women's Information and Development Centre (CIDEM), Bolivia, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of Foreign Relations, International Women's Affairs, Mexico, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of Women, Presidency of the Republic, Paraguay, 1998; Report to ECLAC, General Department for the Advancement of Women, Dominican Republic, 1998; Report to ECLAC, National Institute for Family and Women's Affairs, Uruguay, 1998; Report to ECLAC, National Women's Council, Presidency of the Republic, Venezuela; Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), Mapping Progress: Assessing Implementation of the Beijing Platform, New York, 1998; Web page of the United Nations, [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/followup/national/latinsum.htm].

2. THE LEGISLATURE

The participation of women in the legislature is of long standing. As soon as women obtained the right to vote, they became eligible to stand for election, and in some countries the first women parliamentarians were elected soon after this right had been won. This is true of Brazil, which had the first woman parliamentarian in Latin America, Carlota Queiroz, a federal deputy elected in 1933. It fell to her to participate in drawing up the Constitution which enshrined the right of women to vote (1934). Nonetheless, the presence of women has generally been slow to increase, and it is only recently that they have succeeded in obtaining more than 20% of seats. Some of the reasons given for this are: that women are too fearful to stand, that they tend to be rejected by the party committees which select candidates, and that they find it very hard to obtain funding for their election campaigns. Argentina is the exception, since under the government of Perón and the leadership of Eva Perón women obtained 21.7% in the Chamber of Deputies (36 deputies) and 17.6% in the Senate (6 senators). The entry of women into parliament has had very significant effects. Their presence has meant that laws to deal with their needs can be discussed and passed. Laws of great importance, such as those dealing with protection for women in the workplace, child care, reforms to the civil code, divorce, the creation of a mechanism for the advancement of women, domestic violence and quotas, among others, have been proposed by women in many countries.

A process that is now under way holds out the prospect of greater participation. This is the creation of affirmative action mechanisms – quota laws – aimed at increasing female representation, and these are proving effective. In Argentina, for example, the number of women in the Chamber of Deputies increased from 5.8% (15 deputies) in 1991 to 27.6% (71 deputies) in the 1997 elections, after the passing of the quota law (1991).

Table 15

**WOMEN IN THE LEGISLATURE: COUNTRIES WITH BICAMERAL PARLIAMENTS,
LATEST ELECTIONS**
(selected countries)

COUNTRY	SENATE				CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES			
	YEAR OF ELECTION	BOTH SEXES	WOMEN	WOMEN AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL	YEAR OF ELECTION	BOTH SEXES	WOMEN	WOMEN AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
Antigua and Barbuda a	1994	17	3	17.6	1994	19	1	5.3
Argentina	1995	72	4	5.6	1997	257	71	27.6
Bahamas	1997	16	5	31.3	1997	40	6	15.0
Barbados a	1994	21	6	28.6	1994	28	3	10.7
Belize	1993	8	3	37.5	1998	29	2	6.9
Bolivia	1997	27	1	3.7	1997	130	15	11.5
Brazil	1998	81	6	7.4	1998	513	29	5.7
Chile	1997	48	2	4.1	1997	120	13	10.8
Colombia	1998	102	13	12.7	1998	161	19	11.8
Dominican Republic	1998	30	2	6.7	1998	149	24	16.1
Grenada	1999	15	3	20.0	1999	13	1	7.7
Haiti	1997	27	0	0.0	1995	83	3	3.6
Jamaica	1997	21	5	23.8	1997	60	8	13.3
Mexico	1997	128	19	14.8	1997	500	87	17.4
Paraguay	1998	45	8	17.8	1998	80	2	2.5
Puerto Rico	1997	27	5	18.5	...	51	...	...
Saint Lucia	1997	11	2	18.2	1997	17	2	11.8
Trinidad and Tobago	1995	31	9	29.0	1995	36	4	11.1
Uruguay	1994	30	2	6.7	1994	99	7	7.1
Venezuela	1998	57	5	8.7	1998	206	27	13.1

a Latest information available.

Sources: Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Women's Rights and Status, Haiti, 1998; Report to the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) of the Organization of American States (OAS) presented by Grenada at the Twenty-ninth Assembly of Delegates of IACW, held in the Dominican Republic, 1998; National Follow-up Commission for the Beijing Agreements, El Estado uruguayo y las mujeres, Montevideo, Editorial Cotidiano Mujer, 1999; Web page of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), [http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm]; Web page of the Bolivian Congress, [http://www.congreso.gov.bo/indexv3.html]; Web page of the Puerto Rican Senate [http://www.senado.gvmt.pr.us/frame-senadores.htm].

Table 16

WOMEN IN THE LEGISLATURE: COUNTRIES WITH UNICAMERAL PARLIAMENTS, LATEST ELECTIONS
(selected countries, ranked by percentages)

COUNTRY	YEAR OF ELECTIONS	BOTH SEXES	WOMEN	WOMEN AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
British Virgin Islands	1998	15	5	33.3
Cuba	1998	601	166	27.6
Netherlands Antilles	1998	22	6	27.3
Costa Rica	1998	57	11	19.3
Guyana	1997	65	12	18.5
Ecuador	1998	121	21	17.4
El Salvador	1997	84	14	16.7
Surinam	1996	51	8	15.7
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1995	15	2	13.3
Guatemala	1995	80	10	12.5
Peru	1995	120	13	10.8
Nicaragua	1996	93	9	9.6
Dominica	1995	32	3	9.4
Honduras	1997	128	12	9.4
Cayman Islands	1996	18	...	...
Panama	1999	70	6	8.5
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1998	21	1	4.8

Sources: Nicolasa Terreros Barrios, "Género y poder", paper presented at the twenty-fourth Conference of the Caribbean Studies Association: new frontiers for the new millennium, Panama City, 1998; Web page of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), [http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm]; Elections in the Web, [http://www.agora.it/elections/election/neth_ant.htm]; Elections in the Web, [http://www.agora.it/elections/election/cayman.htm].

Most of the countries in the region have a bicameral parliament with a lower chamber, the Chamber of Deputies, and an upper chamber or Senate. The latter has greater power than the former because it has the power to veto or amend its decisions, or both. According to the information gathered, the countries with the highest female representation in the Senate are in the Caribbean: Belize, Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. The lowest representation is found in Argentina, Bolivia and Chile. In Haiti there are no women in this position. The countries with the greatest female representation in their Chamber of

Deputies are Argentina and Mexico, both of which are federal countries, while the lowest female presence is in Paraguay. There is female representation at this level of the legislature in all the countries for which information is available. The Caribbean countries have substantially lower female representation at this level than in the Senate.

Another group of countries have unicameral parliaments. Among these, the highest female representation is once again found in the Caribbean, in the British Virgin Islands, Cuba and the Netherlands Antilles, but so is the lowest, in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. On average, they have higher female representation than do bicameral parliaments. This indicator shows results that are a very long way from the objective of parity, and although some countries are more than halfway to the target, among those with bicameral parliaments this is the case only with one of the chambers.

a) Parliamentary commissions for women's affairs

In recent years there has been an increase in the number of countries that have a parliamentary commission specializing in legislative matters related to women. These commissions vary in their make-up, but they all have a similar purpose: to protect the rights of women and achieve progress towards gender equity. In some cases these commissions are made up exclusively of women parliamentarians, and they are generally chaired by women. In other countries they are legislative advisory bodies with responsibility for proposing and amending legislation. In the Dominican Republic, for example, the commission is composed of "prominent women" and has an honorific character. Again, there are variations in the extent to which these commissions are institutionalized, i.e. how long they remain in existence and how far they are integrated into general legislative work. Some are dependent on individual legislatures and are renewed, altered or disbanded after each parliamentary election. This is the case in Bolivia, where a Commission on Women was set up for the first time in 1983, and where there is now a Gender and Generational Affairs Committee, set up in 1997.

In around half of the countries with unicameral parliaments there are legislative commissions that deal with issues concerning women. In Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Peru these commissions deal with women's issues from the point of view of the family, or of human development.

Table 17

PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONS FOR WOMEN'S AFFAIRS, YEAR OF CREATION

COUNTRY	YEAR OF CREATION	NAME
Argentina	1995	Bicameral Commission for Women's Rights
Bolivia	1997	Gender and Generational Affairs Committee (Chamber of Deputies)
Brazil	1996	Beijing Commission
Chile	1991	Family Commission (Chamber of Deputies)
Colombia a	...	Seventh Commission (Senate)
Cuba	1976	Standing Commission on Youth, Childhood and Equal Rights for Women
Dominican Republic	1995	Commission of Honorific Women Advosers to the Senate of the Republic
Ecuador	1989	Parliamentary Commission on Women, Children and the Family
El Salvador	1991	Commission on Women and the Family
Grenada	1998	Legal Reforms Committee
Guatemala	1986-87	Commission on Women, Minors and the Family
Guyana	1996	National Commission on Women
Honduras	...	Commission on Women
Mexico	1997	Equity and Gender Commission (both chambers)
Nicaragua	1991	Standing Commission on Women, Childhood, Youth and the Family
Panama	...	Parliamentary Commission on Women
Peru	1996	Commission on Women, Human Development and Sport
Puerto Rico	...	Commission for Women's Affairs (Senate)
Uruguay	1985	Special "Status of Women" commission
Venezuela	1997	Equity and Gender Commissions (Chamber of Deputies and Senators)

... No information available.

a Deals with a wide range of women's and family issues.

Sources: ECLAC "Directory of national organizations dealing with programmes and policies on women in Latin America and the Caribbean", ECLAC, Chile, 1998; Teresa Valdés and Enrique Gómariz, Mujeres latinoamericanas en cifras, Santiago, Chile, Institute for Women's Studies, Spanish Ministry of Social Affairs and Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), 1995; Htun Mala N., Participación, representación y liderazgo político en América Latina, Inter-American Dialogue/WLCA/ICWR, United States of America, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women's Information and Development Centre (CIDEM), Bolivia, 1998; Report to ECLAC, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Cuba, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women's Affairs and Social Security, Ministry of Housing, Grenada, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Guyana, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of Foreign Relations, International Women's Affairs, Mexico, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Centre for Social Studies and Publications (CESIP), Peru, 1998; Report to the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) of the Organization of American States (OAS) presented by Venezuela at the Twenty-ninth Assembly of Delegates of IACW, held in the Dominican Republic, 1998; National Follow-up Commission for the Beijing Agreements, El Estado uruguayo y las mujeres, Montevideo, Editorial Cotidiano Mujer, 1999; Web page of the Colombian Senate, [http://www.senado.gov.co/Senado/ARLEG/Dtarleg.htm]; Web page of the Colombian Congress, [http://www.congreso.gob.gt/Congreso.htm]; Web page of the Puerto Rican Senate, [http://www.senado.gvmt.pr.us/frame-senadores.htm].

In bicameral parliaments, commissions generally sit in the lower chamber, the exceptions being Mexico and Venezuela, where they are bicameral. In Colombia, women's affairs are discussed in an upper chamber commission that deals with a host of other subjects; in Puerto Rico the commission is based in the Senate. Commissions of this kind that were set up before Beijing have a family-oriented approach, while those set up subsequently tend to focus on rights and equity. The names of commissions and the date they were founded give an idea of their approach – whether they are more concerned with welfare or promotion, women or gender. They also reveal the ideological and power balance that exists in each parliament. The importance of these bodies derives on the one hand from their role in legitimizing the legislative needs that arise from the position of women and, on the other, from their ability to ensure that the parliamentary initiatives analysed are dealt with more rapidly and with more specialist knowledge. At the same time, they provide a learning experience for those who sit on them. The existence of these commissions reveals the political commitment of the executive or its legislators to gender equity. Many of them participated in the World Conference in Beijing and in the activities of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Differences in their institutional status are indicative of different levels of commitment.

b) Quota laws

The debate about policies to increase the representation of women in public life has recognized the importance of the affirmative action measures suggested by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Regulations establishing a quota for women in representative positions are considered to be the most appropriate mechanism. The purpose of quotas is to offset the imbalance from which women suffer; as a positive form of action, they are designed to re-establish proportionality. To do this, quotas lay down a minimum and maximum percentage of representation per sex.[4]

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[4] In 1997 the Inter-Parliamentary Union defined a quota as "a temporary measure to facilitate the emergence of a new culture allowing for balanced representation of men and women in parliament and within the governing bodies of political parties". In 1996, the Council of Europe viewed this measure as a way of sharing power between women and men.

The existence of a quota law gives rise to at least three questions. Does greater female representation ensure progress in equity for women? What are the limits, and how should such legislation be implemented in practice? How effective will it really be in increasing female representation? The current debate has thrown up a range of arguments, both for and against, in respect of the goal of increasing the number and quality of women leaders in the world. The arguments in favour are various. Women need to be better represented in decision-making, since if they are not the system is failing to use all its resources efficiently. The socialization experience of women means that they look at the world differently, and female participation in decision-making would raise new questions and give rise to innovation. A greater number of women in positions of power would ensure that the interests of other women were safeguarded. Equitable participation by women in public life would mean that the principle of equality could actually be put into practice. These arguments are based both on the equality between women and men and on recognition of their differences. There are also arguments against, though of a different kind. It is claimed that women are relatively lacking in the skills and experience needed to take on major responsibilities owing to the fact that they have traditionally been confined to the private sphere. It is also affirmed that there are different groups of women, and therefore different interests. Emphasis is laid on the importance of social class and on the danger that access to privileges will generate differences between women. Analysis of the arguments on either side involves asking why and to what end it is believed that women should have power. The response is to be found somewhere in between the arguments for and against. It is perfectly true that women are not a homogeneous social group, since the societies of the region are based on numerous forms of differentiation – by gender, class, race, ethnicity, generation, etc. – which are of long standing, but it is possible to say that women have shared experiences. This means that quotas, while they may not necessarily ensure that women in power will act on the basis of their identity as women, are favourable to the exercise of social pluralism. In other words, while the interests of different women are not always the same, their common experience of being women means that political representation can act as a conduit for the varied social needs of women.

These mechanisms first made their appearance in Latin America with the passing of the Argentine quota law (1991). According to the information available, 13 countries in the region currently have quota laws either in force or under discussion. Quota percentages vary from 20% to 30%. They generally apply to candidate lists, and provide a guarantee that political competition will be tempered to a degree by equality of opportunities. In some cases, such as that of Argentina, it is not only the quota but the electability of the

quota that is guaranteed, to ensure that it is effective. In several countries the quota is progressive and tends towards parity. Only in the case of Argentina can an assessment over time be made, but this demonstrates the effectiveness of the system. Since the law came into force (1991), the proportion of women in the Chamber of Deputies has almost quintupled, from 5.8% to 27.6%. Adoption of these measures is indicative of political will among the different political actors involved in devising, negotiating and passing the relevant legislation or rules. Their effects should be more visible in future.

3. THE JUDICIARY

There are important differences between the way women enter the judiciary and the way they enter the executive or the legislature, as judges and magistrates are not democratically elected.[5] In some countries, the delay in obtaining citizenship was a factor in denying women access to the judiciary. In Guatemala, for example, the first female lawyer graduated in 1927, but she could not practise until 1946 because she did not have the right to vote. In Peru women were expressly debarred from entering the courts, for the same reason. The situation was different in Nicaragua, where women were appointed as judges even though they were not citizens. Another exception was Serafina Dávalos, appointed a member of the Higher Court of Justice in Paraguay in 1910, as no woman was ever appointed to a position in this court subsequently. The systems used for administering justice differ widely between the countries, depending on the judicial traditions to which they belong, the main divide being between those of a Roman type and those of an English type.

The influx of women into the judiciary began to increase in the 1940s. The extent of this increase varied between the different levels (first, second and third instance) and depended on how judges and magistrates were appointed (by the judiciary itself, by the executive, by the Senate or by public competition). In past decades it was also affected by the imperfect separation of State powers in certain countries, this principle being violated on many occasions by dictatorial Governments. Nonetheless, in recent years a large number of countries have

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[5] Cuba has People's Courts that are elected by the Popular Assemblies of their respective levels.

introduced significant reforms in this area, guaranteeing the separation of powers, improving appointment and promotion mechanisms and making it easier for women to enter the system. The aim of the reforms is to modernize the administration of justice, and above all to improve access for all sectors of society, particularly poor and marginalized ones.

Table 18
QUOTA LEGISLATION

COUNTRY	DATE	LEGISLATION
Argentina	1991	Law no. 24012 (30%)
Bolivia	1997	Reform and Completion of the Electoral System Act (candidate list system) (30%)
Brazil	1997	Law 9504 (quota of 20% with provision for increase to 30% in the year 2000)
Chile	1997	Bill to amend the constitutional law on political parties
Costa Rica	1996	Law 7653 (quota for parties and Assembly delegations, 40%)
Domin. Rep.	1997	Electoral Law 275/ 97 (25%)
Ecuador	1997	Labour Protection Act (20%)
Guyana	...	Constitution/Equal Rights Act (30%)
Mexico	1996	Amendment to the Federal Code on Electoral Procedures and Institutions (30%)
Panama	1997	Law no. 22 (30%)
Paraguay	1996	Law 834 Electoral Code (20%)
Peru	1997	Law no. 26859 Article 116 of the Constitutional Law on Elections (25%)
	1997	Law no. 26864 Article 10, subsection 2 of the Municipal Elections Act (25%)
Venezuela	1997	Suffrage and Political Participation Act (30%)

Sources: Jacqueline Jiménez Polanco, "Mujer y clase política en América Latina", document presented at the Twenty-first International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), Chicago, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Foreign Relations, International Trade and Worship, Argentina, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women's Information and Development Centre (CIDEM), Bolivia, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Chamber of Deputies, Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Electoral Service, Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of the Interior, Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Judiciary, Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, National Women's Service (SERNAM), Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Costa Rican Women's Alliance, Costa Rica, 1998; Report to ECLAC, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Cuba, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women and Society Foundation, Ecuador, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Guyana, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of Foreign Relations, International Women's Affairs, Mexico, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of Women, Presidency of the Republic, Paraguay, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Centre for Social Studies and Publications (CESIP), Peru, 1998; Report to ECLAC, National Women's Council, Presidency of the Republic, Venezuela, 1998; Feminist Research and Advisory Centre FEMEA no. 78, Brasilia; Report to the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) of the Organization of American States (OAS) presented by Panama at the Twenty-ninth Assembly of Delegates of IACW, held in the Dominican Republic, 1998.

The participation of women in first and second instance courts has increased substantially in recent decades, but the same has not happened at the higher level. The Supreme Court of Justice is generally a court of cassation: it is the most important judicial body in all the countries. At this highest level of the court system there are substantial differences between the Caribbean countries and the rest of Latin America. The Latin American countries share a tradition based on Roman law, which has different roots from those which provide the basis for the legal systems of the English- and Dutch-speaking countries of the Caribbean. In the Caribbean, most Commonwealth member countries (Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) share the Caribbean Supreme Court, which is based in Saint Lucia. This Court has a resident representative in each country. Out of a total of six representatives, four are women. In Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles the situation is different again, as the Supreme Court of these countries is subject to the monarchy of the Netherlands. Bahamas, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago have an independent Supreme Court whose members are proposed by the head of Government and confirmed by the head of State.

In the countries of Latin America, members of supreme courts are generally ratified by the legislature. The only exceptions are Paraguay and Peru, where members of the judiciary itself elect representatives through councils of magistrates or judges. In some cases (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Dominican Republic, Mexico and Uruguay), the candidates approved by the legislature are proposed by the executive, although preselection may have been carried out by the judges of the court. The proportion of women ministers in the supreme court is under 10% or nil in most of the countries of South America. In Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Haiti, Paraguay and Uruguay there are no women at this level and never have been. By contrast, countries in the Caribbean and Central America (Cuba, Dominican Republic, Granada, Guyana, Panama and Saint Lucia) have the highest percentage of women. The case of Saint Lucia (83.3%) is particularly important, as it is tied in with the administration of justice in a number of countries. In nine countries, almost all of them in Central America and the Caribbean, women make up between 10% and 15% of the members of this court. The fact that supreme court judges have to retire at a certain age in most of the countries, combined with the increase in women's numbers at the lower levels, gives grounds for hoping that the number of women at that level will increase in the medium term. Nonetheless, this indicator does not yet fully reflect the results of reform or the way these will bring about a situation closer to parity. Most of the countries are not even half way to the goal of 50%.

Table 19

WOMEN JUDGES IN THE SUPREME COURT OF JUSTICE, 1990s
(ranked by percentages)

COUNTRY	YEAR	TOTAL	WOMEN	WOMEN AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
Saint Lucia	1997	6	5	83.3
Guyana	1998	11	6	54.5
Cuba a	1997	19	9	49.0
Grenada	1998	73	27	37.0
Dominican Republic	1998	15	5	33.3
Panama	1998	9	2	22.2
Puerto Rico	1998	7	1	14.3
Nicaragua	1998	...	...	14.0
Bahamas	1998	15	2	13.3
El Salvador	1994	15	2	13.3
Venezuela	1998	15	2	13.3
Guatemala	1991	9	1	11.1
Honduras	1993	9	1	11.1
Jamaica	1998	28	3	10.7
Costa Rica	1998	...	...	10.0
Mexico	1998	11	1	9.1
Ecuador	1996	28	1	3.5
Brazil b	1999	33	1	3.0
Argentina	1998	9	0	0.0
Bolivia	1996	12	0	0.0
Chile	1998	17	0	0.0
Colombia	1997	23	0	0.0
Haiti	1999	12	0	0.0
Paraguay	1998	9	0	0.0
Uruguay	1998	5	0	0.0
Peru	1998	...	3	...

... No information available.
a People's Supreme Court. Figures are for professional judges.
b Higher Court of Justice.
Sources: Teresa Valdés and Enrique Gómariz, Mujeres latinoamericanas en cifras, Santiago, Chile, Institute for Women's Studies, Spanish Ministry of Social Affairs and Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), 1995; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Foreign Relations, International Trade and Worship, Argentina, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Bahamas, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bahamas, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women's Information and Development Centre (CIDEM), Bolivia, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Chamber of Deputies, Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Electoral Service, Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of the Interior, Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Judiciary, Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, National Women's Service (SERNAM), Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Higher Council of the Judicature, Colombia, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Costa Rican Women's Alliance, Costa Rica, 1998; Report to ECLAC, United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP), Cuba, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women and Society Foundation, Ecuador, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women's Affairs and Social Security, Ministry of Housing, Grenada, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Guyana, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Women's Rights and Status, Haiti, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of Women, Presidency of the Republic, Paraguay, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Centre for Social Studies and Publications (CESIP), Peru, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Saint Lucia, 1998; Report to the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) of the Organization of American States (OAS) presented by Nicaragua at the Twenty-ninth Assembly of Delegates of IACW, held in the Dominican Republic, 1998; Feminist Research and Advisory Centre FEMEA no. 77, Brasilia; National Follow-up Commission for the Beijing Agreements, El Estado uruguayo y las mujeres, Montevideo, Editorial Cotidiano Mujer, 1990; Web page of the Brazilian Higher Court of Justice, [http://www.stj.gov.br/stj/default.asp]; Web page of the Supreme Court of Justice of the Mexican Nation, [http://www.scjn.gob.mx/inicial.asp]; Magistrates of the Panamanian Supreme Court of Justice Web page, [http://www.sinfo.net/orgjup/organo.htm]; Web page of the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico, [http://www.tribunalpr.org/pleno.html]; Web page of the Government of the Dominican Republic, [http://www.gov.do/Jueces/Jueces%20SCJ.htm]; Web page of the Venezuelan Supreme Court of Justice, [http://www.csj.gov.ve/magistrados/magistrados.html].

In the lower courts, the involvement of women tends to be largely restricted to cases that deal with work, minors and the family. Now that reforms are under way, there are judicial bodies in which women are playing an increasingly prominent part. These are public prosecutors and ombudsmen, whether their work involves the protection of human rights in general or those of women in particular. The existence of ombudsmen to protect the rights of women is connected with the application of the laws penalizing domestic violence that have been passed in most of the countries in the region. In those Latin American countries that have recently experienced dictatorship or war, they are also designed to aid the process of pacification. These ombudsmen exist in Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Peru, among other countries. The differences that this indicator shows between the countries in the Latin America and Caribbean subregions are striking. They are connected with the legal traditions of the countries and the particular characteristics that have resulted from the history and cultural roots of the judiciary and the reform processes implemented. Thus, the situation is better in the Caribbean countries than in the Central American ones, and in turn it is better here than in the South American countries.

V. POLITICAL PARTIES

F emale participation in political parties has a long history, and includes the creation of women's political parties at the beginning of the century and during the struggle to obtain citizenship. Mention may be made of the Women's Republican Party created in Brazil in 1910, the Feminist Party in Argentina in 1918, the Women's Civic Party in Chile in 1922 and the Feminist National Party in Panama in 1924, among others.

Once citizenship had been achieved, many women in the suffragist movement, convinced that this would ensure equality, joined the traditional political parties, thus separating themselves from the movement and losing public visibility.

Historically, women have participated actively in different parties at the grass roots level, but this has not been reflected adequately in national leaderships. This participation is very important, as political parties are not only a system of representation and a channel for intermediation between citizens and the State, but also a way in to political decision-making in the State.

According to the data obtained, the degree to which women are now represented on the governing bodies of political parties varies greatly, especially within each country. Participation rates range from 3% to 50%, the average being 20%, even though women

make up between 40% and 50% of the membership. The balance between women and men on the governing bodies of political parties is not in most cases an equitable one.

Table 20

WOMEN ON THE NATIONAL GOVERNING BODIES OF POLITICAL PARTIES, LATEST YEAR AVAILABLE
(selected countries)

COUNTRY	YEAR	NAME	GOVERNING BODIES		
			TOTAL	WOMEN	WOMEN AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
Argentina	1998	Justicialist Party	33	2	6.1
		Radical Civic Union	25	2	8.0
		FREPASO	8	1	12.5
Bolivia	1998	Nationalist Revolutionary	12	2	16.6
		Movement Free Bolivia	7	1	14.2
		Movement National Consciousness (CONDEPA)	9	2	22.2
Brazil	1998	Workers' Party (PT)	86	26	30.2
		Labour Democratic Party (PDT)	121	18	14.8
Chile	1998	Christian Democrat Party	46	9	19.5
		Socialist Party	36	6	16.6
		Party for Democracy	41	11	28.8
		Independent Democratic Union	17	1	5.8
		National Renewal	30	4	13.3
		Social Democratic Radical Party	30	4	13.3
		Humanist party	7	3	42.8
		Communist Party	5	1	20.0
		Centre Progressive Centre Union Party	32	1	3.1
Colombia	1997	Colombian Communist Party	...	...	18.1
Costa Rica	1998	Christian Social Unity (PUSC) a	70	28	40.0
		National Liberation (PLN)	70	8	11.4
Cuba b	1998	Communist Party of Cuba	150	20	13.6
Dominica	1997	Dominican Labour Party	11	3	27.0
Dominican Republic	1993	Social Christian Reformist Party	39	10	25.6
		Dominican Revolutionary Party	297	30	10.1
		Dominican Communist Party	22	1	4.5
		Dominican Workers' Party	27	1	3.7

Continuation Table 20

El Salvador	1993	ARENA	15	1	6.7
		Christian Democrat Party	40	3	7.5
		Revolutionary National	9	1	11.1
		Movement National (FMLN)	50	7	14.0
Mexico	1997	Institutional Revolutionary Party	29	8	27.6
		(PRI) National Action Party	51	9	17.6
		Democratic Revolution Party	22	6	27.3
		(PRD)			
Nicaragua c	1994	Sandinista National Liberation	27	6	22.2
		Front Christian Social Party	58	12	20.7
		Independent Liberal Party	121	20	16.5
		Communist Party of Nicaragua	103	15	14.6
Panama	1997	Christian Democrat Party	25	3	12.0
		Liberal Party	154	29	18.8
		Nationalist Republican Liberal	81	12	14.8
		Movement			
		Panameñista Party (Arnulfist)	63	10	15.9
		Democratic Revolutionary Party	61	8	13.1
Paraguay	1997	Republican National Association	72	5	6.9
		Authentic Radical Liberal Party	45	5	11.1
		National Rendezvous Party	20	7	35.0
		Febrerista Revolutionary Party	25	7	28.0
		Christian Democra Party	8	4	50.0
Saint Lucia	1997	United Workers Party	22	5	22.0
Uruguay	1998	New Space	15	3	20.0
		Broad Front	28	5	17.8
		Colorado Party	15	1	6.7
		National Party	15	1	6.7
Venezuela	1997	Democratic Action	33	7	21.2
		Social Christian Party (COPEI)	35	3	8.6
		Movement to Socialism (MAS)	34	4	11.8

a National Assembly Members.
b Central Committee and Politburo.
c Regional management committees.

Women's Programme Coordination Office (PRONAM), Las mujeres en el proceso electoral, Mexico, 1997; National Women's Council, Informe nacional. Situación de la mujer en Panamá 1996, Panama, 1997; Report to the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) of the Organization of American States (OAS) presented by Panama at the Twenty-ninth Assembly of Delegates of IACW, held in the Dominican Republic, 1998.

For decades political parties have had women's branches, fronts, secretariats and specialist commissions. With different objectives, depending on the historical context, these often represent an effective way of increasing the presence of women and giving them greater access to more senior positions. The legitimacy of these bodies varies between parties. While in some cases they have influence and are strongly rooted in the social base, with the power to bring about change, in others they have no real power and are marginal to decision-making.

In the light of the progress made by women on the international and national agenda, many of these commissions or sections have modernized their approach and made the attainment of gender equity an internal objective. This has helped to bring change to parties. Indeed, in a number of countries certain parties, influenced by European practice and urged on by women themselves, have sought to increase female representation by establishing internal quota systems. For this purpose they have amended party rules and regulations, providing that no more than a certain percentage of internal leadership positions within the party, and in some cases externally, may be held by either of the sexes. This means that if women do not meet the agreed percentages in elections, the results have to be changed.[6] There are cases where party quotas operate differently,[7] but in general the internal quota systems applied by parties have met their objective efficiently. Such at least has been the experience of those parties that have applied them. This indicator reflects political will in some of the region's parties, and the results of this should become apparent in elections over the coming years.

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[6] In some countries the internal rules drawn up by parties are applied in addition to the quota provisions contained in electoral laws.

[7] In Chile, for example, members of the Christian Democrat Party are obliged by internal quota rules to vote for a set percentage of women; these rules are not limited to establishing a quota of candidacies or elected positions, but ensure that the quota is completely filled in relation to each vote. In the last internal elections this resulted in women taking about 40% of local leadership positions.

In some countries, among which mention may be made of Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama, some political parties have put up women as candidates for the presidency of the nation, successfully so in the cases of Panama and Nicaragua. In Argentina, Graciela Fernández Meijide was an internal candidate for the presidency, but lost the election within the coalition to which her party belongs. In the latest presidential elections held in Chile, in 1999, the Communist Party put up Gladys Marín as its candidate for the presidency.

Table 21

POLITICAL PARTIES WITH INTERNAL QUOTA REGULATIONS FOR WOMEN, AROUND 1998
(percentage quota)

COUNTRY	PARTIES	% QUOTA
Argentina	Radical Civic Union Party	30
	Justicialist Party	30
Brazil	Workers' Party	30
Chile	Christian Democrat Party	25
	Party for Democracy	40
	Socialist Party	40
Mexico	Institutional Revolutionary Party	30
	Democratic Revolution Party	30
Paraguay	Republican National Association	20
	National Rendezvous Party	33
	Febrerista Revolutionary Party	33
Uruguay	Socialist Party	30
	Democratic Action Party	33
Venezuela	Movement to Socialism Party	30

... No information available.

Sources: Jacqueline Jiménez Polanco, "Mujer y clase política en América Latina", document presented at the Twenty-first International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), Chicago; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Foreign Relations, International Trade and Worship, Argentina, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women's Information and Development Centre (CIDEM), Bolivia, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Chamber of Deputies, Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Electoral Service, Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of the Interior, Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Judiciary, Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, National Women's Service (SERNAM), Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Costa Rican Women's Alliance, Costa Rica, 1998; Department of Women, Presidency of the Republic, Paraguay, 1998; Report to ECLAC, National Institute for Family and Women's Affairs, Uruguay, 1998; Report to ECLAC, National Women's Council, Presidency of the Republic, Venezuela, 1998; Feminist Research and Advisory Centre FEMEA no. 51, Brasilia, April 1997; Ecuadorian Women's Political Coordinating Committee, Informativo N° 7 (Special Constitution), Quito, undated; National Women's Programme Coordination Office (PRONAM), Las mujeres en el proceso electoral, Mexico, 1997.

VI. SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AND
LEADERSHIP BY WOMEN

Female participation in social organizations – unions, professional associations and urban grass-roots organizations – dates back to the last century. As in other spheres, though, the participation of women at the grass roots is not reflected proportionately in national leaderships, although in recent years the role of women has been increasing in some countries.

1. UNIONS

In the Latin American countries there is a strong tradition of workers' and union organizations. Created at the end of the nineteenth century, they drew their inspiration from European syndicalism. As is well known, women participated in this nascent workers' movement in Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, and it was not long before the first women's unions were set up and went on to hold strikes and industrial action.

The incipient industrialization process of the import substitution model required large contingents of female workers, particularly in the footwear and garment industries, among others. Women's federations and unions arose there, and a distinguished contribution was made by leaders who participated in the workers' struggles of the first decades of this century. This early participation changed as the organization of workers became

institutionalized and the big union confederations were created in the 1930s, whereupon women ceased to play an important role at the leadership level. This marginalization has continued until the present day, as under-representation of women is the norm at the different levels of the union movement.

Over the years, women have developed certain strategies to enhance their presence and weight in the union movement, including the creation of women's secretariats and departments, link-ups between unions, and the holding of meetings and congresses for women trade unionists. Although they do not have great influence on decisions of a political nature, they have managed to have specifically female demands placed on the union agenda, such as wage equality, the right to own land in the countryside, denunciation of sexual violence in the workplace and measures to combat it, an end to pregnancy testing for job applicants, and child-care facilities.

The extent of female leadership in unions differs between sectors, reflecting the degree to which these are feminized. Thus, greater female representation can be found in unions from the service sector and certain branches of industry and commerce. Nonetheless, there are a number of obstacles to the integration of women into union activity, among them being the double working day, the lack of support services for household tasks and child care, the weakness of the female working identity, and the dynamics of union operations, as everything about these, from their political concerns and priorities to their hours, are very masculine.

Union confederations are the highest level of union organization. They bring together union federations and groupings, both urban and rural, from all the different sectors of the economy. For this report, information was collected on union confederations and also on major national unions. Substantial differences can be identified between the countries of the Caribbean and those of Latin America. In the latter, big union confederations predominate.

The information collected reveals great variations in the degree of female participation on the national governing bodies of union confederations and national unions. In some cases, women are completely absent, while in others they hold up to 60% of leadership positions.

The union confederations and national unions where women are best represented are the Dominica Amalgamated Workers' Union (60%) and the Dominica Civil Service Association (50%), the Venezuelan Workers' Confederation and two unions in Saint Lucia

(40%), the United Workers' Confederation in Brazil and the Peruvian Workers' Confederation (both 30%). At the other extreme, there is no female presence in the General Labour Confederation in Argentina, the National Countryside Commission in Chile or the National Workers' Confederation in Paraguay. In some confederations and unions women account for between 10% and 20%. This indicator reveals serious deficiencies in the participation of women at the leadership level, although progress can be seen in certain confederations and unions. These deficiencies often arise in grass-roots organizations (unions, federations and groupings). It should be noted, however, that despite the difficulties of recent years unions and union confederations have played a preponderant role in different countries in securing progress in legislation on the protection of mothers, sexual harassment and other issues. Similarly, they have secured ratification of International Labour Organisation agreements by Governments.

The challenges for unions today come from the consequences of globalization, the integration of markets, the greater "flexibility" of labour markets and the establishment of new negotiating procedures. Female workers have been particularly affected, given their history of job insecurity, under-protection and wage discrimination. Nonetheless, in some cases of trade integration union leaders have joined in with negotiations on labour issues. This is the case with MERCOSUR.

2. PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

In the region, professional associations have a long record of developing the professions they represent, acting as conduits for specific demands and protecting professional ethics. They have also played a significant political role in the democratization processes of certain countries, such as Brazil and Chile.

Participation by women in professional associations has been increasing, but this is not reflected proportionately at the leadership level. At the same time, segmentation by gender in the workforce is echoed at this level. Thus, women are well represented in associations of psychologists, nurses, chemists and lawyers, while in medical or engineering associations their presence is virtually nil. By and large, the representation of women on governing bodies is not proportionate to their numbers in the membership, and this indicator is therefore unsatisfactory, with very few exceptions.

Table 22

WOMEN ON THE NATIONAL GOVERNING BODIES OF NATIONAL UNIONS AND UNION CONFEDERATIONS, LATEST YEAR AVAILABLE
(selected countries)

COUNTRY	YEAR	ORGANIZATION	LEADERSHIP LEVEL	TOTAL	WOMEN	WOMEN AS % OF TOTAL
Argentina	1994	General Labour Confederation	National Governing Council	24	0	0.0
Aruba	1998	Trade Union	Executives	11	1	9.1
Barbados	1998	CTUSAB	Executives	65	19	29.2
Bolivia	1997	Bolivian Workers' Federation	Executive Committee	40	1	2.5
Brazil a	1998	United Workers' Confederation	Executives	...	...	30.0
British Virgin Islands	1998	Teachers' Union	National Executive	...	1	...
Chile a	1998	Amalgamated Workers' Confederation	National Executive Board	7	2	28.0
Colombia	1997	National Countryside Commission	Presidency	1	0	0.0
		Colombian Workers' Confederation	National Executive Board	87	6	6.9
		Amalgamated Workers' Confederation	Executive Committee and National Board	90	8	8.8
Cuba	1996	Cuban Workers' Confederation	Secretariat of the Seventeenth Congress	20	5	25.0
Dominica	1997	Civil Service Association	Executives	13	7	50.0
		Waterfront and Allied Workers' Union	Executives	11	2	20.0
		Dominica Trade Union	Executives	13	2	20.0
		Dominica Teachers' Association	Executives	28	8	30.0
		Dominica Amalgamated Workers' Union	Executives	10	6	60.0
Dominican Rep. b	1991	Amalgamated Workers' Confederation	Executive Bureau	11	2	18.2
Mexico	1991	Mexican Workers' Confederation	National Executive Board	47	2	4.3
Nicaragua c	1993	National Workers' Confederation	National Executive Board	12	3	25.0
Panama	1997	Alliance of seven Confederations	Governing Boards	88	12	13.6

Continuation Table 22

Paraguay	1997	Combined Workers' Confederation	National Executive Board	19	2	10.5
		National Workers' Confederation	National Executive Board	25	0	0.0
		Paraguayan Workers' Confederation	National Executive Board	27	3	10.0
		State Union Confederation	National Executive Board	14	2	10.0
Peru	1994	General Confederation of Peruvian Workers	National Leadership	53	2	3.0
		Peruvian Workers' Confederation	National Leadership	16	5	30.0
		Peruvian Farmers' Confederation	National Leadership	23	3	10.0
Saint Lucia	1997	St. Lucia Civil Service Association	Executives	10	4	40.0
		St. Lucia Teachers' Union	Executives	7	3	40.0
		National Workers' Union	Executives	22	5	20.0
Uruguay	1998	Inter-Union Workers' Assembly	Executive Secretariat	13	1	7.6
Venezuela d	1998	Venezuelan Workers' Confederation	National Executives	17	6	40.0
		General Confederation of Workers	National Executives	24	2	10.0
		Venezuelan Amalgamated Workers' Confederation	National Executives	15	3	20.0
		CODESA	National Executives	11	1	9.0

a Largest confederation.
b There are other confederations in the country.
c Confederation of longest standing.
d Confederation with the most members.

Sources: Teresa Valdés and Enrique Gómariz, Mujeres latinoamericanas en cifras, Santiago, Chile, Institute for Women's Studies, Spanish Ministry of Social Affairs and Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), 1995; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Aruba, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Barbados, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women's Information and Development Centre (CIDEM), Bolivia, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women's Desk - Chief Minister's Office, British Virgin Islands, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Higher Council of the Judicature, Colombia, 1998; Report to ECLAC, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Cuba, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Dominica, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Youth, Women, Childhood and the Family, Panama, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of Women, Presidency of the Republic, Paraguay, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry for Women's Affairs and Human Development (PROMUDEH), Peru, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Saint Lucia, 1998; Report to ECLAC, National Women's Council, Presidency of the Republic, Venezuela, 1998; Feminist Research and Advisory Centre FEMEA no. 64, Brasilia, May 1998; National Follow-up Commission for the Beijing Agreements, El Estado uruguayo y las mujeres, Montevideo, Editorial Cotidiano Mujer, 1998; Guía Silber, Santiago, Chile, 1998.

Table 23

**WOMEN ON THE GOVERNING BODIES OF SELECTED PROFESSIONAL
ASSOCIATIONS, LATEST YEAR AVAILABLE**
(selected countries)

COUNTRY	YEAR	NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION	TOTAL	WOMEN	WOMEN AS % OF TOTAL
Brazil	1998	Brazilian Lawyers' Organization	...	1	...
		Brazilian Press Association	...	0	0.0
		Federal Council of Medicine	...	0	0.0
Chile	1998	Bar Association	20	3	15.0
		Medical Association	34	3	8.8
		Association of Engineers	21	2	9.5
		Association of Journalists	11	2	18.1
		Association of Psychologists	9	5	55.6
Costa Rica	1998	Association of Journalists	8	2	25.0
		Political Sciences Association	8	3	37.5
		College of Nurses	8	8	100.0
		Association of Geologists	8	3	37.5
		Association of Agronomists	...	0	0.0
		Association of Chemists	8	6	75.0
Nicaragua	1994	Nicaraguan National Confederation of Self-Employed Teachers	6	3	50.0
Paraguay	1998	Paraguayan Studies Association	9	3	33.3
		Association of Agronomists	18	3	16.7
		Paraguayan Architects' Association	10	1	10.0
		Paraguayan Engineers' Centre	8	1	12.5
		Paraguayan Doctors' Circle	16	5	31.3
		Paraguayan Clerks' Association	14	7	50.0
		Association of Economics Graduates	8	3	37.5
Peru	1998	Psychologists' Association	37	15	40.5
		College of Pharmacists	15	13	86.7
		Association of Accountants	15	4	26.7
		Bar Association	10	2	20.0

a Contains 14 professional associations.
Sources: Report to ECLAC, Costa Rican Women's Alliance, Costa Rica, 1998; Report to ECLAC,
Nicaraguan National Women's Institute, Nicaragua, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of Women,
Presidency of the Republic, Paraguay, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Centre for Social Studies and
Publications (CESIP), Peru, 1998; Feminist Research and Advisory Centre FEMEA no. 64, Brasilia,
May 1998; Guía Silber, Santiago, Chile, 1998.

3. EMPLOYERS' ORGANIZATIONS

The situation in business or employers' associations is very different. These are organizations that hold a great deal of power, particularly since the entrenchment of economic models of a neoliberal bent that assign them a leading role in economic development. Here, the presence of women is virtually nil. The exceptions are found, in certain countries, in industry, trade and exporting. Colombia stands out, with women accounting for 35% of the leadership in the industrial sphere, while in Nicaragua women have a representation of around 17% in the Chamber of Commerce. Since these decision-making bodies act as the political arm of those who hold economic power, the dearth of women is particularly regrettable.

Primarily, this is a reflection of the difficulties women face in gaining access to either decision-making or representative positions in the world of private enterprise and business. This is an eminently male world where the mechanisms used to discriminate against women are renewed and refined as they improve their position there. The participation deficit is doubly severe: women are not present in companies either as owners or as executives, nor are they represented in their organizations.

4. WOMEN'S SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

Collective action by women, although poorly documented, goes back in some countries to the nineteenth century. Initially confined purely to welfare work, it gradually opened out to concerns about the status of women, which were expressed in cultural, suffragist and feminist organizations that fought for access to education, labour reforms and equality with men in civil and political rights. Once women had obtained the vote, women's movements and organizations dispersed. Many of their members joined political parties, while others went into the different State authorities, sectors of the civil service and also the universities. They gradually integrated into the areas that had been opened up by their own efforts.

The social activities of women are interwoven with the political, economic and social history of the region. The periods in which they have come to prominence and the areas in which they have worked have been determined by their needs as women, those of their families, and indeed those of society as a whole.

During the course of this century, over and above the great differences between and within countries, we can distinguish certain strands of female organization that are found, with different degrees of development, in many of them: feminism, welfare, charity and voluntary work, political movements, the fight for human rights, the struggle for subsistence and equality of access to power. These strands came together at certain times in pursuit of common objectives, producing a rich social fabric and movement.

In particular, women's social organizations played an important role in the different countries after the 1970s, when they formed a broadly based movement that brought together everything from neighbourhood and community organizations to women's political organizations. It was in these decades that we saw the flowering of non-governmental organizations, small non-profit-making institutions that carried out research and worked for the advancement of women. The creation of women's homes, information centres and battered women's hostels brought a support network into being in communities and cities.

In those Latin American countries with a history of political repression, the participation of women was important in the human rights movement. These organizations aimed not only to democratize society but also to combat discrimination against women and defend human rights.

Again, factors like the economic depression of the 1980s and the demographic changes produced by the modernization process led to social organizations providing a focal point for the creation of strategies for collective survival in a world that was giving rise to new needs. In historical terms, the work of social organizations has been moving from the social to the political sphere (Valdés, Pérez de Arce and Faúndez, 1999). As their objectives have transcended the merely local and particular, these organizations have been making more universal demands.

Linkage and coordination between organizations in different countries began to increase in the 1970s, a particularly important development being the feminist congresses of Latin America and the Caribbean inaugurated in Colombia in 1981. In 1999 the eighth congress is to be held in the Dominican Republic. These have been attended first by hundreds and then by thousands of feminists in the region. They are the culmination of the congresses and meetings held in the different countries and are of great importance as an expression of identity and for the feminist debates that take place there.

Table 24

**WOMEN ON THE GOVERNING BODIES OF SELECTED BUSINESS OR EMPLOYERS'
ORGANIZATIONS, LATEST YEAR AVAILABLE**

COUNTRY	YEAR	BUSINESS OR EMPLOYERS' ORGANIZATION	TOTAL	WOMEN	WOMEN AS % OF TOTAL
Bolivia	1993	Bolivian Private Employers' Confederation	10	0	0.0
Brazil	1990	National Industry Confederation (CNI)	15	0	0.0
		National Trade Confederation	33	0	0.0
		Rio de Janeiro Industry Federation	26	0	0.0
		State of Sao Paulo Industry Federation	28	0	0.0
Chile	1998	National Agricultural Society	11	0	0.0
		Banking Association	9	0	0.0
		Industrial Development Society	13	0	0.0
		Chilean Construction Chamber	11	0	0.0
		National Society of Mining	4	0	0.0
Colombia	1997	National Association of Industrialists (ANDI)	17	6	35.3
El Salvador	1994	National Private Enterprise Association a	355	18	5.1
Mexico	1994	Confederation of National Chambers of Industry	74	2	2.7
		Confederation of National Chambers of Commerce	305	11	3.6
Nicaragua	1993	Higher Council of Private Enterprise	20	1	5.0
		Nicaraguan Chamber of Commerce	12	2	16.7
Paraguay	1998	Federation of producers, industry and commerce	16	0	0.0
		Rural Association of Paraguay	37	0	0.0
		Chamber of Exporters	9	0	0.0
		Paraguayan Industrial Union	14	0	0.0
		Christian Employers' Association	13	1	7.7
Peru	1994	Association of Exporters	37	2	5.4
Uruguay	1998	Chamber of Industry	16	1	6.2
Venezuela	1991	FEDECAMARAS b	301	14	4.7

a Represents 37 associations.
b Presidents of chambers.

Sources: Teresa Valdés and Enrique Gómariz, Mujeres latinoamericanas en cifras, Santiago, Chile, Institute for Women's Studies, Spanish Ministry of Social Affairs and Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), 1995; Report to ECLAC, Higher Council of the Judicature, Colombia, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of Foreign Relations, International Women's Affairs, Mexico, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of Women, Presidency of the Republic, Paraguay, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Centre for Social Studies and Publications (CESIP), Peru, 1998; Guía Silber, Santiago, Chile, 1998; National Follow-up Commission for the Beijing Agreements (1999), El Estado uruguayo y las mujeres, Montevideo, Editorial Cotidiano Mujer, 1998.

Among the main forms of political action undertaken by women, both nationally and regionally, have been thematic networks. Women's organizations and non-governmental organizations have built up thematic networks to deal with the subjects of health, violence, work, adult education, etc., and they have also been formed in other specific sectors, covering for example black, indigenous and lesbian women. This practice has spread to the whole region, feeding back into the national networks of which they are formed.

In 1984, the creation of the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network, which links together national networks, non-governmental organizations, other organizations and individual women, marked the beginning of coordinated action by women from the movement in the region. The Network sets a regional and local action agenda for each year. Particularly noteworthy are the campaigns mounted to prevent maternal mortality, decriminalize abortion and secure humanitarian treatment for incomplete abortion. The networks and organizations in each country implement these campaigns in a way that is tailored to national characteristics and situations.

In 1988 the Women's Popular Education Network was set up, to be followed in 1990 by the Latin American and Caribbean Network against Sexual and Domestic Violence. Regional networks for black women, indigenous women, lesbian women and women parliamentarians have also been created. These networks have come into being because of the need to take coordinated political action internationally, but from the basis of individual organizations and individual countries. This makes it possible to exchange information and resources, implement a common agenda and strengthen each organization or institution. Working in networks requires clear objectives and working plans, ties of trust, and motivation and interest on the part of participants (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). Networks have drawn up international agendas that have been institutionalized in a timetable of events attended by the women's movement from year to year, examples being the International Day of Action for Women's Health (28 May), No more violence against women day (25 November), and International Women's Day (8 March). All of them have participated actively in the World Conferences (Cairo, Beijing, the International Conference on Adult Education, etc.), promoting changes in legislation and the application of specific programmes in the individual countries. An outstanding contribution was made by the Latin American and Caribbean Network against Sexual and Domestic Violence in drawing up the Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women (Belem do Pará, 1994).

Again, a number of organizations, non-governmental organizations among them, have created territorial coordination mechanisms, associations and federations built around the special characteristics of each country. All of these aim to enhance and amplify the activities of their members.

Table 25

NATIONAL WOMEN'S NETWORKS AND COORDINATION BODIES, LATEST YEAR AVAILABLE a
(by number in each country)

COUNTRY	YEAR	NUMBER
Brazil b	1987	18
Argentina	1998	16
Peru	1992	11
Chile	1991	8
Venezuela	1993	8
Mexico	1998	6
Colombia	1993	5
Ecuador	1992	5
Uruguay d	1997	5
Costa Rica	1993	4
El Salvador	1993	4
Paraguay	1998	4
Bolivia	1998	3
Nicaragua	1998	3
Panama c	1993	2
Cuba	1997	1
Grenada	1998	1
Guatemala	1989	1
Honduras	1989	1
Dominican Republic	1993	1

a Includes networks and coordination bodies of non-governmental organizations and women's social organizations.
b Includes federations, movements and networks of which only two are Brazilian.
c Includes Forum of Women in Political Parties.
d Covers coordination bodies, federations and networks.
Sources: Teresa Valdés and Enrique Gómariz, Mujeres latinoamericanas en cifras, Santiago, Chile, Institute for Women's Studies, Spanish Ministry of Social Affairs and Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), 1995; Report to ECLAC, Women's Information and Development Centre (CIDEM), Bolivia, 1998; Report to ECLAC, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Cuba, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women's Affairs and Social Security, Ministry of Housing, Grenada, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of Foreign Relations, International Women's Affairs, Mexico, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Nicaraguan National Women's Institute, Nicaragua, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of

Women, Presidency of the Republic, Paraguay, 1998; Report to ECLAC, National Institute for Family and Women's Affairs, Uruguay, 1998; Zita Montes de Oca, Directorio instituciones de mujeres, Buenos Aires, Feminist Information and Documentation Centre, undated.

The process of preparing for the Beijing Conference, which was done at the regional and subregional levels, contributed to closer links between women's organizations in the different countries and non-governmental organizations and academic centres, giving a new impetus to the women's movement and creating the conditions for a new movement embracing the entire region. Important processes took place within the countries, and these are now bearing fruit in the rewriting of their political agendas.

As the process of preparing for the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) got under way, regional and subregional meetings and exchanges became more frequent. In the process of organizing the Non-Governmental Organizations' Forum, held in Mar del Plata (1994), subregional[8] coordination systems and a regional[9] coordination structure were created to discuss an agenda for women on the basis of meetings held in the countries. Hundreds of women from throughout the region met in Mar del Plata and new networks, such as the one for indigenous women, were created. Family violence, structural adjustment policies and women's participation and citizenship were the principle subject areas discussed.

A parallel process took place at the Cairo Conference where, under the leadership of the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network, the women's movement used its influence to help secure important new measures that were embodied in a world Plan of Action dealing with sexual and reproductive rights. At the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, Latin American organizations, in collaboration with first world ones, were instrumental in securing full inclusion of women's human rights. Similarly, with the creation of the Latin American and Caribbean Network against Sexual and Domestic Violence they contributed to the drafting of the Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women (Belem do Pará, 1994).

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[8] The subregions were: the Caribbean, Mexico, Central America, the Andean Region, Brazil and the Cono Sur.

[9] This was run by Virginia Vargas, a feminist leader of long experience, who is a member of the Flora Tristán Centre, based in Lima, Peru. She was joined in this work by Ana Falú from Córdoba in Argentina.

In the 1980s and 1990s the women's movement has become increasingly institutionalized, largely through the creation of small institutions (non-governmental organizations). This has led to greater specialization and has altered relations with public bodies, but has given rise to tensions within the movement, largely due to the difficulty of maintaining and developing links with grass-roots social organizations and to the type of relations that have been established with the State.

The financing crises they have faced in many countries have meant that more of them have had to fall in with the wishes and proposals of public bodies, acting in their professional technical role as executors of programmes or consultants, and largely losing their political role. This has brought to the surface the issues of the movement's independence and the type of relationship it should have with the State. This tension has become more acute as governmental mechanisms have largely taken over what was the agenda of the movement in the 1970s and 1980s. Again, professionals and specialists from the women's non-governmental sphere have moved into the agencies and structures created in public bodies following the development of equality policies. In many countries they have been actively involved in incorporating the equity agenda into policies. Nonetheless, these significant contributions have had consequences for the non-governmental world, and the greatest challenge has been to plan a new women's agenda for the third millennium, building on achievements to date.

Since the Beijing Conference, the organizations in the movement have adopted a variety of strategies to make the Platform for Action an instrument of political action for women. They have increasingly been adopting a citizen oversight approach to redefine relations with the State.

At the regional level, contacts between thematic networks have been continued and new meetings are planned to prepare for the extraordinary session of the United Nations General Assembly, which will deal with the subject of "Women in the year 2000: equality between the genders, development and peace for the twenty-first century". The objective of all these meetings was and is to assess how much ground has been gained or lost by women and to what extent the agreements contained in the Cairo world Programme of Action and the Beijing world Platform for Action have been honoured.

5. WOMEN'S PROGRAMMES AND COURSES IN CENTRES OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Increasingly over the last few years, universities have been instituting women's programmes and courses, including specific women's studies and the introduction of a gender perspective into different disciplines. Most of these are in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in the humanities, law and social sciences. The introduction of these subjects by universities is having at least two effects. On the one hand, new knowledge is being produced and accumulated and old problems re-examined through the application of new paradigms, while on the other hand a new transversal approach is being taken to the different disciplines.

Given the role that higher education plays in socializing and training future professionals, academics, etc., the introduction of these courses as agents of change and innovation is of the greatest importance. This indicator reveals partial progress in what is a strategic area, the training of human resources sensitive to gender equity.

Table 26

WOMEN'S PROGRAMMES AND COURSES IN UNIVERSITIES AT THE UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE LEVELS, 1997-1998
(selected countries, by number of courses and programmes in each country)

COUNTRY	YEAR	UNDERGRADUATE	POSTGRADUATE	TOTAL
Cuba	1998	15	22	37
Argentina	1998	...	...	30
Mexico	1998	5	10	15
Nicaragua	1998	6	3	9
Chile	1998	5	3	8
Costa Rica	1998	1	2	3
Panama	1998	...	...	3
Uruguay	1997	2	1	3
Aruba	1998	0	0	0
Bolivia	1998	0	1	1
Ecuador	1998	...	4	...
Grenada	1998	2	...	...
Peru	1998	...	1	...
Venezuela	1998	3	...	...

... No information available.

Sources: Report to ECLAC, Ministry of Foreign Relations, International Trade and Worship, Argentina, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Bureau of Women's Affairs, Aruba, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women's Information and Development Centre (CIDEM), Bolivia, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Chamber of Deputies, Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Electoral Service, Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Ministry of the Interior, Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Judiciary, Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, National Women's Service (SERNAM), Chile, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Costa Rican Women's Alliance, Costa Rica, 1998; Report to ECLAC, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Cuba, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Women's Affairs and Social Security, Ministry of Housing, Grenada, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Department of Foreign Relations, International Women's Affairs, Mexico, 1998; Report to ECLAC, Nicaraguan National Women's Institute, Nicaragua, 1998; Report to ECLAC, National Institute for Family and Women's Affairs, Uruguay, 1998; Report to ECLAC, National Women's Council, Presidency of the Republic, Venezuela, 1998; Manuela Ramos Movement, "El sistema de cuotas: Una propuesta para la participación política de la mujer", working document no. 1, undated; Manuela Ramos Movement, Servicio de Información a congresistas nos. 14, 17, 18, 19 and 20, Peru, 1997; National Follow-up Commission for the Beijing Agreements, El Estado uruguayo y las mujeres, Montevideo, Editorial Cotidiano Mujer, 1997.

VII. SOME FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

T he information collected enables us to draw conclusions on at least two subjects: the quality of the information available, the gaps in it and its actual content, and what the indicators reveal as being the situation in the region and its subregions. It also throws up new challenges for Governments.

1. INFORMATION FOR CHANGE

Given these results, the priority is to improve the information available. What is needed for this is a systematic record of information broken down by sex, converted into statistics and made available for public access. A review of the list of indicators included in the Annex gives an idea of how much of the information needed to understand the situation of women and their changing participation is unavailable.

When seeking information to cast light on the situation of women in the different spheres of socio-political participation, we are confronted with a number of difficulties. The first of these is that the type of statistical information needed is not available separately for each sex. Although there are bodies in the different countries that regularly measure

some of the data required, it is rare for this information to be broken down by sex. This is the case with information on elections. More importance is attached to the distribution between political parties than between the sexes. In other cases, information is not recorded in the form of continuous statistics, examples being data on women in cabinet positions, ambassadorships and other posts to which appointments are made by the authorities.

Information can seldom be found on the membership or leadership of political parties, unions, professional and employers' organizations, etc. The most difficult data to obtain, however, are those on women's organizations themselves, from the most institutionalized, such as non-governmental organizations, civil associations and feminist organizations, to the grass-roots organizations and other groupings that make up the wider women's movement, its alliances and its networks.

The whole complex of women's associations is very dynamic and has undergone marked changes in recent years, but as neither quantitative nor historical records are available it is impossible to give an account of the social process it represents. These associations, in fact, are real schools of female leadership and, in many cases, an antechamber through which women pass into the traditional spheres of politics.

The gaps in the information provided by this document may help to make different social actors and sectors aware of the importance of having accurate and reliable records and statistics in this subject area that are broken down by sex and produced and published regularly. These would make it possible to produce historical series with more accurate indicators that would facilitate evaluation of the overall impact of the gender equity measures that are being applied and to identify obstacles and challenges more accurately.

At the regional level, the diversity of institutional and legal situations in the countries means that it is not always possible to establish comparisons between them. In some cases, different ways of doing things prevent information being collated in a standardized form, one example being voter registration, which is automatic in some countries and voluntary in others. In other cases, we cannot be sure that the information collected means the same thing in the different countries. The way governors are chosen (in states, provinces, departments or regions) is one example of this: in some countries they are democratically elected, while in others they are appointed by the highest national authority, which means that the indicator is dealing with different systems and processes.

Another complex case is that of female participation in the administration of justice, owing to the fact that major reforms have been implemented in the judiciary in recent years. In some countries new positions and bodies have been created, while in others the make-up, rank and appointment mechanism of the structure is different (competition based on experience or appointment by higher officials).

Furthermore, the concept of an "indicator" is not generally understood. Indicators are not just information, but provide a comparison, a meaningful and expressive account of a social process that we wish to understand, a process of change that we wish to observe. This means that full information is needed for each indicator (the total number of positions and the number of women in them, for example). Again, not all sources are equally reliable. Official or specialist sources, or both, carrying a guarantee of rigour in the way the information is collected and processed, are not always available. This is especially important for the Caribbean subregion, where basic information needs to be centralized, a process involving not only systematization but also the construction of systems of common indicators.

Where some subjects are concerned, specific research needs to be carried out, for example to produce records of women's organizations broken down by objectives and activities, or of female participation in political parties.

All the information presented here ought to be broken down to reflect the situation at lower levels: in states, in provinces and locally. This would provide a picture of the internal diversity of countries and enable comparisons to be made so that the factors associated with similarities and differences could be identified. In federal countries this would involve research at the level of states or provinces (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela) that are independent of the national or federal level.

There is also a need for comparative analyses of the political and institutional processes experienced by the different countries and subregions. This would provide a fuller context within which to assess the meaning of these indicators in each country and ascertain why women have achieved higher levels of participation in some countries than in others, and to identify the peculiarities and obstacles that exist in countries with lower levels of participation. This type of research would enable us to identify which political systems have been the most favourable to the attainment of equity and under what conditions, or to ascertain whether the deciding factor has been the political strength of organized women and their alliances with other institutional or social actors.

Lastly, whereas the indicators identified for this report relate to female participation and the political will to improve it, in future we shall need to construct indicators that enable the impact of these agencies and measures to be evaluated. It would be desirable to produce an index that synthesized all these indicators and enabled the situations of different countries and the developments that occurred, be they positive or negative, to be compared over time, in the same way as the Human Development Index (United Nations Development Programme) does. This can be done once the avenues of research described have produced results.

2. PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

In substantive terms, it may be said that women continue to be under-represented in the different spheres of power, but at the same time there are signs to suggest that certain actors have the political will to alter this situation for the better, and this points to changes in the medium term. Nonetheless, the situation between and within countries is quite diverse, and we do not necessarily have access to the specific information that would enable us to appreciate the variety of situations that exists in each of them. In other words, we only have an overall picture, for certain indicators.

It is important to emphasize the differences between the subregions. The situation of Latin America is quite different from that of the English- and French-speaking Caribbean. Political processes, the institutional framework in the individual countries and subregions, social history and cultural roots have brought into being particular contexts that make it difficult to interpret the two subregions from the same standpoint. Consequently, substantive comparative research that takes these factors into account will be required for a proper reading of the information collected in this text. Over and above the diversity of the region, the Caribbean countries share a subregional institutional structure that provides a certain homogeneity and some common criteria for addressing political and economic challenges. CARICOM and the relationship that many of the countries have with the Commonwealth provide a sense of community that goes beyond mere economic integration. The way the State is structured and the relations between it and civil society, and between the countries making up the subregion, are affected by this, something which is borne out by the common traits brought to light by several of the indicators chosen here, which point to an increase in the importance assigned to women and gender equity in their policies.

Unlike the Caribbean, the Latin American countries display great diversity both internally and with respect to one another. In this subregion, the indicators presented here are not always consistent within individual countries. In a given country women might be well represented in parliament, but not at all in unions or the judiciary. This means that positive results do not indicate a general policy of facilitating the access of women to decision-making, but rather that each sphere has its own dynamic and operates as a closed system.

Citizenship would appear to be a contradictory and elusive state for the women of our countries, since although substantial progress has been made with political and civil rights, economic, social and cultural rights have not been fully achieved. These are rights that require the State to play an active role, just when we are seeing the State withdraw from the work of social protection.

The idea of citizenship is linked in practice to power-related conflicts, reflecting struggles over who can say what when common problems have to be solved, and how these problems will be addressed (Jelin, 1996, p. 116). State modernization and reform processes, decentralization and globalization have led to strong tensions arising in relation to the participation of women. The institutional actors concerned do not always take account of the right to have rights and to participate in the public debate over the content of standards, laws and policies, in other words the exercise of citizenship. These are processes that, taken all together, evince citizenship deficits.

Despite these deficits, women have secured greater access to decision-making. This is manifested at some levels of the State apparatus and, in some countries, in political parties too. The activities of the latter can result in a significant increase in the presence of women, in both popularly elected and Government-appointed positions. Nonetheless, the goal of parity of representation is nowhere near being met in any part of the executive or legislature. Only in the judiciary can some exceptions be found in the supreme courts of justice of the Caribbean countries.

Unquestionably, the international agenda, and the events and agreements it has spawned, have contributed substantially to the creation of political will among Governments and other institutional actors. Important instances of this are the creation of national mechanisms for the advancement of women and the new status of gender and, even more fundamentally, of women as a priority group for public policies.

To some extent, the institutional reforms that have been undertaken at State level in the different countries, and the political reforms associated with efforts to democratize or improve democracy, have opened up a varied range of opportunities for women. In these processes women have become part of the new national and international institutions, and have influenced their orientation. They have also been involved in proposing and passing laws and regulations to further their cause, introducing new changes from their own institutional base.

In the social sphere (unions and professional and employers' organizations from which information could be obtained), although there is perceptibly greater female participation in the governing bodies of union confederations in some countries, women are still poorly represented in relation to their numbers in the membership. In professional organizations the presence of women does not correspond to the percentage of the membership they account for either, but their participation is higher where gender segmentation is a factor, i.e. "traditionally female" professions have a large number of women on their governing bodies. By contrast, the figures for employers' organizations provide a dramatic illustration of the lack of female representation in the economic power that now dominates market economies.

The scantiness of the information available makes it difficult to give an account of what is happening at present with women's organizations and non-governmental organizations. Only very partial information can be given about the strength and dynamism of these organizations. This is unacceptable, as it is the women's movement itself that has participated in and promoted the international agenda for equity between the genders and in opposition to discrimination against women. The information that exists is fragmentary and discontinuous, and does not reflect the work they have put into bringing about this change.

3. THE CHALLENGES RAISED

The greater depth of social participation and the search for parity of leadership between women and men in our countries have raised new challenges and renewed old ones. These are found at different levels and have to be addressed by different actors.

As has already been pointed out, the lack of parity and balance in the way decision-making is shared between women and men reveals an inequality of power in both the private and public spheres, which are mutually reinforcing. To resolve this, it is not enough to wait for the changes introduced in general policies to take effect. These need to be accompanied by specific policies that increase the capabilities and opportunities of women in a way that incorporates this concept of balance between the genders.

Governments need to act more determinedly to:

a) strengthen institutional mechanisms that advance parity and promote the participation of women;

b) create forums where real dialogue can take place – and decisions be made – about public policy planning with civil society and its representatives;

c) spend a consistently higher percentage of funding on public policies that have a gender aspect or are aimed at women;

d) develop consistent public policies aiming at gender equity;

e) work on an intersectoral basis for gender equity and mount campaigns to eliminate discriminatory practices against women within the State and in society as a whole.

To overcome the difficulties that women face, it will be necessary to remove the obstacles that hinder participation and to create conditions that facilitate it. To achieve this, what is needed is a State that is able to develop cooperative, less vertical policies that give citizenship a greater role, i.e. that make people more aware of their right to have rights. This change can only be brought about through concerted action by social and political actors and economic and cultural agents. Governmental mechanisms for the advancement of women need to develop programmes that treat women as citizens entitled to rights and not just as a vulnerable group or as beneficiaries.

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ANNEX

LIST OF INDICATORS RELATING TO
POWER AND GENDER EQUITY

INDICATORS	AVAILABILITY OF INDICATORS
Citizenship	
Year women obtained the vote	■
Participation by women in elections: voting by women (blank, invalid and valid votes) as a proportion of all votes. Latest national, parliamentary and municipal elections	●
Participation in the executive	
First woman to become a minister or secretary of state, by year and portfolio	■
Women Presidents of the Republic or equivalent	■
Women Vice-Presidents of the republic or equivalent as a proportion of the total	■

Women Ministers, Secretaries of State or equivalent as a proportion of the total	■
Women Deputy Ministers, Under-Secretaries or equivalent as a proportion of the total	■
Women Governors in states, provinces or departments (federal countries, non-federal countries) as a proportion of the total	☐
Women in local government (municipalities or equivalent) as a proportion of the total	■
Women in official diplomatic positions as a proportion of the total	☐
Women in the civil service, by service and category, as a proportion of the total	☐
Women in the armed forces, by branch and category, as a proportion of the total	☐
Governmental mechanisms for the advancement of women	
Year of ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)	■
National governmental bodies for the advancement of women	■
Provincial or state mechanisms for the advancement of women (in federal countries) out of the total number of states or provinces	☐
Equal opportunities plans for women or equivalent, currently in force	■
Programmes for women in ministries or departments of State	☐

Municipal offices for women out of the total number of municipalities	☐
Mechanisms to follow up the Beijing agreements	☐
Budget of the national body as a proportion of the total budget	●
Budget of the national body as a proportion of GDP	●
Participation in the legislature	
Women in bicameral national parliaments as a proportion of the total (incumbents and deputies)	■
Women in unicameral national parliaments as a proportion of the total (incumbents and deputies)	■
Women in state or provincial parliaments (in federal countries) as a proportion of the total (incumbents and deputies)	☐
Parliamentary commissions whose remit includes legislation relating to women	■
Women speakers of national parliaments	☐
Women chairing parliamentary commissions at the national level as a proportion of the total	☐
Women speakers of state or provincial parliaments	☐
Women chairing parliamentary commissions at the state or provincial level as a proportion of the total	☐
Quota laws for elections to representative positions (parliamentary and municipal)	■

Participation in the judiciary	
Women in the national supreme court of justice as a proportion of the total	■
Existence of attorney general's offices, public prosecutor's offices or ombudsmen that deal specifically with crimes against women. Name and year of creation	☐
Participation in political parties	
Women on the national governing bodies of political parties as a proportion of the total	☐
Women members of political parties as a proportion of the total	☐
Parties with internal quota regulations for women	☐
Participation in workers' unions and union confederations	
Women on the governing bodies of national union confederations as a proportion of the total	☐
Women on the governing bodies of urban unions as a proportion of the total	●
Women members of urban unions as a proportion of the total	●
Women on the governing bodies of rural unions as a proportion of the total	●
Women members of rural unions as a proportion of the total	●

Participation in cooperatives	
Women on the governing bodies of cooperatives as a proportion of the total	●
Women members of cooperatives as a proportion of the total	●
Participation in professional associations	
Women on the governing bodies of professional associations as a proportion of the total	□
Women members of professional associations as a proportion of the total	●
Participation in business or employers' organizations	
Women on the governing bodies of business or employers' organizations as a proportion of the total	□
Women members of business or employers' organizations as a proportion of the total	●
Participation in university students' federations	
Women leaders of university federations as a proportion of the total	●
Participation in the organizations of indigenous or ethnic groups	
Women leaders as a proportion of the total	●

Social organizations, non-governmental organizations and women's networks	
National, provincial and local women's organizations whose objective is the advancement of women	●
Women's social organizations, by type and objective	●
Grass-roots women's movements, by type and objective	●
Non-governmental organizations whose activities are directed at women, by type and objective	●
Women's networks and coordinating organizations at the national, state/provincial and local levels	☐
Women's refuges, by municipality	●
Centres providing information on women's rights, by municipality	●
Gender or women's studies at universities	
University courses on gender or women's studies	●
Postgraduate courses on gender or women's studies	☐

Notes:

■ Indicator available

☐ Indicator with availability problems

● Critical indicator, with severe availability problems