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Fifty-third meeting of the Presiding Officers of  
the Regional Conference on Women in Latin  
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**ANNOTATED INDEX OF THE POSITION PAPER FOR THE THIRTEENTH SESSION  
OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA AND  
THE CARIBBEAN, "GENDER EQUALITY AT THE CORE OF SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT: 40 YEARS SINCE THE FIRST SESSION OF THE REGIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN"**

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*“Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centred sustainable development”*

Beijing Platform for Action,  
Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995

## **BACKGROUND**

Pursuant to paragraph 3 of the agreements adopted at their fifty-first meeting, held in Santiago, from 17 to 19 November 2014, the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean agreed to “adopt [...], for discussion at the thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, the theme of gender equality, women’s autonomies and sustainable development: progress towards implementation” (ECLAC, 2015a).

At the fifty-second meeting of Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Santo Domingo, on 30 and 31 July 2015, the Division for Gender Affairs, ECLAC, presented a draft annotated index of the position paper for the thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. In paragraph 16 of the agreements adopted at that meeting, the member countries decided to “endorse the proposal by the secretariat on the topic, focus and content of the position paper for the thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, including the conceptual framework outlined and the road map for the coming months, and request the secretariat to incorporate the comments made by the country representatives at the present meeting” (ECLAC, 2015b).

In accordance with the aforementioned agreements, an annotated index is set out below of the document “Gender equality at the core of sustainable development: 40 years since the first session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean”. The index sets out the structure of the document, the main thematic areas to be addressed, linked to various targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, and a brief description of the importance of each issue and the approach that will be adopted. It also includes possible text boxes that could complement analysis in each area.

The challenge for this document is to reflect the conceptual and programmatic links between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the regional agenda on gender, outstanding issues and priorities for Latin America and the Caribbean to make progress towards gender equality and women’s autonomy an intrinsic part of sustainable development. It is hoped that the document will form the basis for discussions at the thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean and the framework for a strategic plan to implement government agreements through specific public policies.



## **I. THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS BY 2030**

### **A. FROM THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN REGIONAL TERMS**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, recently adopted by member States, recognizes the central importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women to move towards sustainable development patterns. It establishes 17 Sustainable Development Goals, while recognizing that each country has different approaches, visions of the future, models and tools to achieve sustainable development. In particular, Goal 5, to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” (United Nations, 2015), establishes a special regulatory framework that should be reflected in specific policies in member States. This framework provides an opportunity to advance the construction of a regional agenda for sustainable development based on gender equality and women’s autonomy and rights, following on from lessons learned and commitments already made.

As a result of the lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda includes targets and means of implementation to achieve them, and prioritizes the collection of disaggregated data “to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure that no one is left behind” (United Nations, 2015, para. 48). While the Goals and targets are aimed at all nations and all segments of society, governments agreed that “we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first” (United Nations, 2015, para. 4). This is a broader and more comprehensive approach than that proposed by the Millennium Development Goals, but it is undermined by regional challenges. Existing commitments under the regional agenda on gender are ambitious and comprehensive and should not be weakened by the pledges made by governments under the 2030 Agenda, but rather complemented by them.

Global monitoring mechanisms, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Population and Development and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, have a pivotal role to play by ensuring that their sessions monitor progress towards the targets for equality and women’s empowerment under the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the full and effective implementation of the commitments of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Similarly, the follow-up mechanism for the Sustainable Development Goals for Latin America and the Caribbean should be aligned with existing regional institutions. “The architecture of the Commission’s subsidiary bodies represents a regional commons and an essential resource for coordinating follow-up and monitoring of the new Agenda” (ECLAC, 2015c, p. 85). In this connection, the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the governments that comprise it, has a crucial role to play in negotiating public policies that will contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in synergy with its own agenda.

Based on the analysis of the structural nature of inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC has made equality the goal, with structural change as the path and politics as the instrument. Thus, structural development gaps must be overcome and women’s autonomy in different spheres must be achieved.

## **B. STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES TO DEVELOPMENT WITH GENDER EQUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY**

In addition to ending poverty, the 2030 Agenda seeks to reduce inequality, to promote sustained economic growth, decent work and innovation, and to combat climate change. Over the last decade, Latin America has seen a decrease in inequality as measured by the Gini coefficient (ECLAC, 2015d); however, inequality is still one of the region's most serious problems.

The 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing + 20) showed that in the last two decades important institutional, legal and social developments have occurred in Latin America and the Caribbean that mean that women in the twenty-first century are in a better position than at any other time in history. Yet, at the same time, there are still major obstacles to the exercise of rights, including the persistence of violence against women, limited social and political participation, resistance to changes in the sexual division of labour, barriers to entry to the labour market and the burden of care (ECLAC, 2015e). In addition to this, there are institutional constraints within States that undermine efforts to promote, in a decisive manner and as a matter of priority, an agenda focused on overcoming inequalities. Thus, in the middle of the second decade of this millennium, the regional picture is made up of positives and negatives.

## **C. FINANCING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS, ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

In July 2015, United Nations member States adopted the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. This Conference examined the progress made in and obstacles to the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Declaration, but it mainly focused on agreeing to measures to support the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Discussions were influenced by the global economic slowdown, growing uncertainty and volatility. Thus, the Action Agenda favours the mobilization of domestic resources and private sector contributions to finance sustainable development (Bidegain, 2016).

With regard to the Sustainable Development Goals, Latin America and the Caribbean is at a crossroads in terms of the social, economic and environmental challenges that lie ahead and the economic resources available. The latest data shows that the region's gross domestic product (GDP) contracted by 0.4% in 2015 which translates into a 1.5% downturn in per capita GDP. This is the region's poorest performance since 2009 and has had an effect on regional poverty and employment rates (ECLAC, 2015f). In the Caribbean the situation is even more complex, with public debt at 69.5% of GDP. In 2013, the total public debt of ten countries from the subregion was between 76% and 130% of GDP, leading to unsustainable levels of debt (ECLAC, 2015g).

However, developments in economic activity and the performance of the wage labour market are highly heterogeneous among subregions and countries. This indicates that, despite the shrinking fiscal space, there is room to take the urgent measures necessary to further and sustain the progress made under the Millennium Development Goals, particularly to prevent adjustment measures having a direct effect on women's rights. This has happened in previous situations where women, through domestic and unpaid care work within the home, compensated for the lack of social policies and public investment cuts in this area (Cornia, Jolly and Stewart, 1987). Although social spending has continued to rise since the early 1990s,

reaching 19.1% of GDP in 2012-2013, there has been a reduction in the rate of growth over the last three years (ECLAC, 2015d). This is a new wake-up call. “In the current context, active fiscal policies to promote smart adjustments gain greater relevance: analysing the level of public spending as well as its composition to avoid excessive cuts to public investment and social spending...” (Bárcena, 2015).

In the last five years, some countries of the region report that they have implemented some kind of reform of budget management models and developed a specific methodology to monitor public investment and its impact on women’s autonomy and gender equality (ECLAC, 2015e). However, financing and investment mechanisms pose an ongoing challenge for all Latin American and Caribbean countries. Most budget lines that can be identified as specifically aimed at advancing gender equality and protecting women’s rights are limited to a narrow set of costs associated with State gender institutions, policies on violence against women and some public services, for example in the health sector.

Investment in public resources to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals is obligatory if the targets are to be met successfully. This becomes more complex when, in addition to the resources for Goal 5, resources are needed to meet specific targets under other Sustainable Development Goals (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17), while mainstreaming a gender equality and women’s autonomy perspective throughout the sustainable development agenda. The financial implications of the challenges will require strong political will and the involvement of multiple public and private actors.

## **II. FROM THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN INTO DEVELOPMENT TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WITH GENDER EQUALITY**

### **A. FORTY YEARS SINCE THE FIRST SESSION OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

The uninterrupted progress made by Latin America and the Caribbean since the first session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (Havana, 1977) and the 11 subsequent sessions, shows how an approach to public policy was built, with the participation of the feminist movement, governments and international organizations, that goes beyond the initial observation of women’s vulnerability, the conviction that their disadvantaged position is improved by changing women rather than society, or the focus on equal opportunities, to reach an analytical and innovative perspective focused on rights-holders and autonomy as a basis for equality and sustainable development (González Vélez, 2016). Thus, the spotlight is on rights-holders and on the obligations and responsibilities of the institutions that guarantee the exercise of those rights and the processes that lead to gender equality pacts and to the enforcement of mechanisms to reverse inequality, eliminate discrimination and violence, and redistribute time, resources and roles.

## Box 1

**International treaties and intergovernmental agreements that support a rights-based approach**

*Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels  
(Sustainable Development Goal 5, target 5.c)*

**B. THE REGIONAL AGENDA ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S AUTONOMY**

This section will examine the main contributions to the agenda on gender proposed in the last 15 years in the agreements adopted at the sessions of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean held in Mexico City, Quito, Brasilia and Santo Domingo. At the same time, based on the agreements adopted by governments and a comprehensive vision of sustainable development that addresses the structural causes of inequality, it will reflect on the links between the regional agenda on gender equality and women's autonomy and the global agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals. Special emphasis will be placed on the economic agenda for development and gender equality.

**III. MULTIDIMENSIONAL NATURE OF DEVELOPMENT, EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S AUTONOMY**

Based on a comprehensive vision of gender equality, this chapter will analyse, in depth, women's autonomy, understood to mean "people's capacity to take free and informed decisions about their lives, enabling them to be and act in accordance with their own aspirations and desires, given a historical context that makes those possible" (ECLAC, 2011, p. 9), as expressed in three main areas —economic, physical and decision-making— and in their relationships. This analysis will highlight the multidimensional nature of sustainable development.

An essential element of the agenda of structural change for equality, which ECLAC has launched in the region, is gender equality. In this connection, women's autonomy forms the basis for greater equality and sustainable development. This is linked to the focus of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and of its Committee on substantive equality to correct disadvantages, counter prejudices and violence, transform social and institutional structures and facilitate political participation and social integration (United Nations, 2004).

There is a reciprocal relationship between autonomy and equality. A development approach that empowers people must be built around equality. Equality can only be effective when there is autonomy and the freedom to exercise one's rights (Stefanovic, 2015). Moreover, a woman's individual freedoms depend on the level of autonomy that has been achieved by women in that society (Rico, 1993).



## A. ECONOMIC AUTONOMY AND DISTRIBUTIVE EQUALITY

*Ensure women's equal rights and access to economic, natural, productive and financial resources  
(Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 1, targets 5.a and 1.4)*

### 1. Care: pillar of the integrated production and reproduction process

*Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work  
(Sustainable Development Goal 5, target 5.4)*

To address the sustainability of human life, it must be analysed on the basis of a chain made up of five logical and historical links, namely natural systems, domestic care work, communities, State public administration and markets (Carrasco and Tello, 2012). Viewed from this perspective, the economy is a much more complex reality than the market and the State, in which women play an important, but barely visible, role as the providers of unpaid care services in households (Durán, 2016). Thus, in addition to being a value, equality is a factor that can transform economic development.

### 2. Earnings, sufficient income and overcoming poverty

*Reduce at least by half the proportion of women living in poverty in all its dimensions,  
eradicate extreme poverty and create pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies  
(Sustainable Development Goal 1, targets 1.2, 1.1 and 1.b)*

In 2014, it became clear that the pace of poverty reduction in Latin America, as measured by household income, had stagnated at around 28% since 2012, while extreme poverty had increased from 11.3% to 12% (ECLAC, 2015d), as a result of the economic slowdown that the region continues to experience. However, the reduction in poverty and the growth in GDP that has taken place over the last decade have not benefitted men and women equally. On the contrary, women tend to be overrepresented in poor households, where there was a sustained increase in the femininity index, from 108 to 117 women for each 100 men between 1990 and 2013. In 2013, 1 in 3 women from the region did not have their own income and 8 out of 10 women in the labour market worked in low-productivity sectors in terrible working conditions.

#### (a) Income and use of time

Women's monetary and time poverty creates a vicious circle that is very difficult to escape without special policies to foster women's economic autonomy. The burden of unpaid work done by women hinders their possibilities of entering the labour market, and becomes even heavier, demanding even more time, in households that live in extreme poverty. Households in the lowest income deciles have the highest number of dependants to care for (mainly children and persons with disabilities or chronic illnesses). Women from these households therefore have greater responsibilities for a high number of dependents and higher demands on their time for domestic and care work, which prevents them from looking for a job and entering and remaining in the labour market. In the lowest income quintile, 42.3% of women aged over 15 do not have their own income; this decreases to 18.6% in the highest quintile.

Asymmetries between men and women have a monetary component but are also due to the different areas of work that they undertake, which accentuates the gender gap in the home. Therefore, analysis of income alone offers an incomplete and simplistic picture of poverty, particularly as to its impact on women, and as one of the main mechanisms of gender inequality in our societies. It is therefore essential to examine monetary resources and time use when designing policies to address the vicious circle between lack of income and lack of time, and thus to take steps towards sustainable development with equality, participation and decision-making.

**(b) The migration dilemma as an economic opportunity**

*Protect the labour rights in particular of women migrants and those in precarious employment  
(Sustainable Development Goal 8, target 8.8)*

As a result of poverty, a lack of opportunities, the complementarities of labour markets and the sexual division of labour, the last two decades have seen an increase in the number of women migrating across frontiers within their country or the region. For example, the Caribbean has the highest rate of migration by educated workers in the world (70% of higher education graduates migrated to developed countries between 1965 and 2000). The situation of nurses is particularly noteworthy.

Thus, as the migration rates of women have increased for economic reasons, they are sending more remittances, thus contributing to the development of their countries of origin. At the same time, they also receive the most remittances, as calculated by amount and frequency, and invest these resources for the benefit of their families. While it is difficult to compile remittances data disaggregated by sex, some studies (Cervantes, 2015) clearly show the importance of women's participation in this economic flow that is vital for some countries of the region.

**3. Discrimination and inequality in employment**

*Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women  
and equal pay for work of equal value  
(Sustainable Development Goal 8, target 8.5)*

One of the main developments under the 2030 Agenda is the inclusion of employment and decent work as integral to sustainable development. Since its inception, the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean has included women's participation in paid work and overcoming poverty among its concerns, as a result the region is now on the right track.

There have been major improvements in some labour market indicators, but women's entry to the labour market is marked by three characteristics to be considered as a matter of priority:

- (i) The decoupling between education and work. It is known that there has been progress towards achieving parity in access to education and educational attainments, and that the average number of years spent in education by the economically active population aged 15 and older is higher for women than for men (9.6 and 8.8 years respectively in 2013). Despite this, women, regardless of their skills and abilities, continue to face obstacles to getting paid work, and when they do, there is a significant gender wage gap. In this connection, comprehensive attempts to achieve the different targets under Sustainable Development Goal 4, concerning the quality of education, should be closely linked to the employment targets (Sustainable

Development Goal 8) and to the targets to overcome poverty, particularly the phenomena of intergenerational reproduction and feminization (Sustainable Development Goal 1).

- (ii) The resistance to change in the sexual division of labour, mainly from men. This means that women undertake paid employment and provide care more hours per day (total work), throughout their lives, without tasks being redistributed within households. If women do enter the job market, it is difficult for them to get decent, paid work.
- (iii) Women's participation in the labour market is deeply segmented by economic sector. Eight out of ten working women are employed in low-productivity sectors, which affects their salaries, social protection and working conditions, and means that they have fewer options and less access to successful career paths, new technologies and innovative sectors.

#### Box 2

#### Women working in the mining industry

##### (a) Female domestic workers

In Latin America, 11% of women enter the labour market through paid domestic work, accounting for 95% of people working in this service industry (Vaca-Trigo and Rico, 2016). In the region, approximately 18 million people are employed in domestic work, who account for 7% of all employed persons (ILO, 2015). This work is still undervalued and precarious, and is one of the activities with the highest decent work deficit. In particular, there are high rates of informality and deregulation, and women who work in this sector are often victims of discrimination, exploitation and abuse. In addition, a large proportion are internal or international migrants, or indigenous or Afro-descendant women, this intersectionality produces overlapping inequalities, which are exacerbated by poverty. As was affirmed at the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, "caring is a task for women, and serving one for poor women" (ECLAC, 2007). This situation began to change for the better in some countries in 2012 with the ratification of the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), which helps to guarantee the rights of women working in this economic sector.

##### (b) Integration of Latin American Afro-descendant women into the workforce

In the labour market, as in other areas, a complex system of multiple and simultaneous structures of oppression disempowers specific groups of women, which is known as intersectionality. This is the case for Afro-descendant women and their entry into paid work, which cannot be interpreted, much less addressed, by isolated variables and must be analysed using an integrated approach.

According to census data, there are over 120 million Afro-descendants in Latin America. However, there is a deficit of public policies specifically designed to meet the needs of this population group, particularly Afro-descendant women. One of the factors underpinning this situation is the lack of information; "*statistical invisibility is also discrimination*" (Milosavljevic, 2015). Afro-descendant women, who have a very onerous family burden as they tend to live in households with more dependents, enter the labour market at an early age and leave it later than other women. Their wages are lower than those of their male peers and Afro-descendant women are overrepresented among domestic workers. This scenario partly explains why they are overrepresented in population groups living in poverty or extreme poverty.

Public policies for Afro-descendant women are set against the backdrop of the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024), the regional agenda on gender, which since the eighth session of the Regional Conference on Women (Lima, 2000) has increasingly reflected agreements concerning their rights, and the demands made by the movement of black and Afro-descendant women, which have pointed out the failure to consider and include their reality in analysis of gender discrimination.

Box 3

**The minimum wage: an instrument that benefits women**

*Adopt fiscal, wage and social protection policies, to achieve greater equality  
(Sustainable Development Goal 10, target 10.4)*

**4. Biases in social protection**

*Implement social protection systems for all, and achieve substantial coverage  
of the poor and the vulnerable  
(Sustainable Development Goal 1, target 1.3)*

**(a) Pension systems and their deficit with women**

The demographic trends of the ageing population and increased life expectancy have highlighted not only the greater representation of women among older adults, but also their exclusion in old age, and the importance of pension systems. The position of women in such systems is precarious; on average, they have significantly lower pension coverage and receive amounts that are 20% lower than men's pensions.

The inequalities reflected in the data directly violate international mandates to ensure that men and women have equal rights to social security (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, article 11). The origins of these inequalities are strongly linked to the dynamics of the labour market and the social organization of care. Women who have a career path marked by lower participation in the labour market, higher incidences of unemployment, jobs in low-productivity and informal economic sectors, and career breaks after becoming mothers and owing to the uneven gender distribution of the burden of care work in the home, are less able to contribute to pension systems, both in terms of the amount and the frequency of contributions. In the absence of mechanisms that explicitly address these patterns and redistribute the costs of social reproduction, it is expected that their pensions will be lower, leaving them unprotected in old age.

Pension systems' design has a direct impact on whether existing gender inequalities get worse or better. Gaps are exacerbated by the fact that the systems are based on assumptions that give priority to recipients who have an uninterrupted and stable career in a formal economic sector and, therefore, fail to consider the differentiated needs arising from women's career paths. Moreover, inequalities are exacerbated by the introduction of openly discriminatory mechanisms, such as mortality tables differentiated by sex for calculating pensions, which penalize women because of their longer life expectancy. In addition to this, the pension systems ignore women's contribution to social protection through unpaid care work, which remains a pending issue in the region and must be addressed to consolidate the equality agenda.

## Box 4

**Social protection, programmes to overcome poverty and conditionalities****5. Climate change and access to, use of and control over natural resources**

*Promote mechanisms for climate change-related planning and management, focusing on women; build their resilience and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental disasters (Sustainable Development Goals 13 and 1, targets 13.b and 1.5)*

At the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Paris, from 30 November to 11 December 2015, the governments of 195 countries adopted the Paris Agreement, a new universal agreement on concrete measures to reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that are warming the planet. The Conference did not examine in depth the implications that the proposed sustainable development model would have on women's rights and gender equality, a model where environmental justice and a human rights-based approach are an integral part of the commitments and which addresses the structures that foster the injustice and inequality that has caused the climate crisis.

Studies show that in Latin America and the Caribbean the effects of climate change, such as drought, extreme weather events, natural disasters, and less food and water security, affect women and men differently according to the roles and status that they are given.

As women are affected more, they have a crucial role to play in the climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts that are currently being called for around the world. Therefore, their active participation in decision-making processes is vital, but was not given sufficient consideration at the Conference of the Parties as part of the process to meet the climate challenge, to achieve the long-term objectives of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, and to reach the Sustainable Development Goals. Every day, women employ strategies at home to address climate change, using innovative methods steeped in experience and the ability to adapt to changing environmental realities. Despite their contributions to a solution and the well-being of their families, local, national or global strategies still give scant consideration to and have little regard for this resource.

## Box 5

**Natural disasters and women's rights in the Caribbean**

In the countries of the region, women living in poor households in rural areas and those who belong to indigenous peoples are charged with preparing food and ensuring that there is water and energy for heating and cooking. As the negative effects of climate change have increased, these chores have become more difficult in terms of time, energy and economic costs, while remaining the responsibility of women and, sometimes, children; there has been no redistribution or sharing of the tasks with men. In addition, there are no extensive programmes to replace used fuel that produces harmful emissions in homes. Women often face greater difficulties in accessing financial resources, technology and training, which limits their potential to contribute even more and to come up with the tools needed to implement the solutions to save the planet.

Women can play a central role in mitigation efforts, but it is important to ensure that this new responsibility does not add more domestic and unpaid care work to their already heavy workload. In this connection, in addition to being ambitious and long-term, public policies should, in response to a comprehensive approach to development, systematically examine ex ante impact assessments of women's rights and gender equality programmes and projects, in order to take the necessary preventative measures.

This will require an accurate diagnosis tool and analysis of access to, control and use of natural resources by men and women, with particular focus on access to water and forest management as productive resources for women.

**(a) The exclusion of rural women**

As part of the debate on climate change, its consequences, and access to, use and control of natural resources, this section will focus on the situation of rural women in Latin America and the Caribbean, existing deficits in the exercise of their rights and autonomy and their contribution to sustainable development in the region.

## **6. Access to productive assets**

**(a) Barriers to entrepreneurship**

*Ensure that businesswomen and female entrepreneurs [...] have access to marketing mechanisms and to credit.  
Paragraph 40, Santo Domingo Consensus*

Women in the region face significant barriers to entrepreneurship (starting or creating a business), linked to legal, proprietorial, bureaucratic, fiscal and cultural obstacles that block access to credit and financial services. For example, according to a report by the Superintendancy of Banks and Financial Institutions in Chile, there are significant gender gaps in account ownership and the use of financial products for savings and credit, even after controlling for other variables, such as income, education and employment (SBIF, 2015 p. 13). There are also other, non-financial barriers in the world of business that affect the entrepreneurial opportunities of men and women differently. Women's access to all financial services, including savings, insurance, remittance transfers and credit, is essential if they are to benefit fully from the economic opportunities that arise in their countries, and if they are to be able to make financial decisions on their own.

**(b) Barriers to innovation**

*Enhance the use of information and communications technology,  
to promote the empowerment of women  
(Sustainable Development Goal 5, target 5.b)*

Bearing in mind that it is an agenda for the next 15 years, the Sustainable Development Goals attach a great deal of importance to information and communication technologies (ICT) for sustainable development. The region already discussed the matter at the twelfth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Santo Domingo, in 2013, where the central theme was women's participation in technological change. However, while women are attaining ever higher educational levels and achievements, they remain a minority on PhD programmes and in scientific and

technological research, and are granted fewer resources than their male colleagues to carry out their work. They hold fewer positions of high responsibility, such as those on the governing boards of scientific institutes and universities (UNESCO, 2015). Moreover, in Latin America and the Caribbean, the obstacles to innovation are linked to the difficulties that women face in staying in the field of science and in the ICT industry. Women are less likely to be employed in ICT-related occupations and, consequently, those that are, are more likely to hold low-level positions. There is therefore a significant shortage of women with technical training in this area and there are almost no professional women involved in the development of the ICT sector (Scuro and Bercovich, 2014).

## **B. PHYSICAL AUTONOMY, FREEDOM AND RIGHTS**

The 2030 Agenda acknowledges that it is not possible to achieve gender equality or to guarantee a healthy life in a sustainable development framework without recognizing women's autonomy in matters of sexuality and reproduction. The agreements adopted by the Regional Conferences on Women and on Population and Development have taken further steps towards recognizing the importance of the freedom to exercise sexual and reproductive rights fully. Regional priority measures have been established to step up efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals according to the most urgent regional challenges.

### **1. Child and teenage pregnancy and motherhood**

*Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights  
(Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 3, targets 5.6, 3.7, 3.1 and 3.3)*

One of the biggest obstacles to women's autonomy at the beginning of their life cycle is teenage pregnancy and, even more so, child pregnancy. Information available from the 2010 censuses carried out in 18 countries of the region indicates that 14.4% of women aged between 15 and 19 are mothers, one of the highest rates in the world. These figures are even more alarming in rural areas and among indigenous women. This situation is linked not only to the fact that they become sexually active at a young age, but also to the deficits in sexual education, limited access to contraception and, in some cases, to sexual violence.

It is estimated that around 1.5% of girls aged between 10 and 14 are mothers. Each case, usually the result of rape or sexual abuse, should be dealt with quickly and firmly in order to mitigate the immediate and future consequences for the girls' physical and mental health, their well-being and their rights (Céspedes, Robles and Rico, 2016).

#### **Box 6 Child marriage**

### **2. The right to health and a full life**

#### **(a) The inclusion and empowerment of women with disabilities**

In more than half of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, the prevalence rate of disabilities is higher among women than among men. As women have a longer life expectancy, the

prevalence of disability is also higher among older women (ECLAC, 2013b). Women who have a physical or mental disability—whatever their age—face multiple social, cultural and economic obstacles and are more likely than men to be the victims of discrimination, abuse and sexual violence. The lack of public policies that address their needs and rights means that the high cost of their exclusion is paid by their caregivers, usually other women.

Box 7

**The right to free time and its enjoyment**

*Provide access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women  
(Sustainable Development Goal 11, target 11.7)*

**3. Violence against women**

*End all forms of discrimination and violence against all women and girls  
(Sustainable Development Goals 5, 10 and 16, targets 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 10.2, 10.3 and 16.b)*

Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the regions of the world where the most progress has been made in the legal field to eradicate violence against women, although much remains to be done to deal with this scourge comprehensively. In the last 20 years, thanks to the strong impetus from the adoption of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belem do Pará), legislation has been enacted and criminal and civil codes have been amended in an effort to eradicate gender violence, and actions have been taken to support victims during judicial proceedings. Since 2005, some countries have developed this initial approach and passed “second-generation” laws that build and expand upon earlier legislation, take into account different forms of violence (including physical, psychological, sexual, economic or property, obstetric, symbolic and media), take women’s age, sexual diversity, ethnicity and race into consideration, and provide for comprehensive care for victims, including protective measures and consequences for failure to comply (ECLAC, 2015h).

While major efforts have been made to improve the legal culture and people’s rights in cases of gender-based violence, programmes are needed that will provide women with greater protection and facilitate their social and family reintegration. It is therefore vital to improve data on violence against women in various fields and its various forms, and to extend the communication campaigns that have contributed to a cultural change that punishes any form of gender-based violence and does not justify it on any grounds.

**(a) Violence in public spaces**

While most legislation limits State protection from violence against women to family and domestic circles, second-generation laws, which 10 countries have now adopted, and comprehensive national plans have expanded the scope of that protection to public spheres. This has helped to raise awareness of the violence that women face and the vulnerable position in which they find themselves.

Discrimination in the labour market is accompanied by abuse and workplace harassment that targets women wage earners. Some countries have passed legislation on the matter, but the market and policies do not always consider this to be a factor in decent work.



Violence is a mechanism to exercise power and control over another, and in the case of women who choose to participate in public decision-making, political harassment is used to discourage them, control them, discriminate against them and, more importantly, to prevent them from freely exercising their right to participate in civic life and national development.

*Provide access to safe transport systems for all, with special attention to the needs of women  
(Sustainable Development Goal 11, target 11.2)*

In Latin America, men and women experience very different levels of freedom when walking down the street or using public transport. Women face more threats, linked to the fear of rape or kidnapping, together with other forms of daily violence as expressed in words, sounds, negative comments, bodily contact or touching and physical abuse that make them feel less safe on the street. Cities are therefore areas where women's physical integrity and autonomy can be threatened. Public security policies are needed to remedy this situation.

**(b) The most dramatic and extreme form: femicide**

A significant regional development in recent years is the adoption of laws or reforms of criminal codes in 16 countries, which codify the murder of women as femicide (a separate crime from others already covered in criminal legislation), or qualify gender as an aggravating factor in a murder. This progress draws more attention than ever to those countries that have still not legislated on this matter.

**(c) Cost of doing nothing and investment in reparations**

In some countries, public policies are taking the role of the State in the eradication of violence against women to new levels. Although there is still a gap between the de jure and de facto situations, policies are beginning to address other areas besides prevention and support for victims, such as the importance of penalties and of acknowledging the State's responsibility for reparations where there was a lack of protection or guarantees for the right to live a life free of violence. However, there is still no comprehensive public response to gender-based violence. This is mainly because political resolve is weak and, when it is stronger, public policies deal with legislative and legal aspects but fail to address social factors effectively (Rodríguez Enríquez and Pautassi, 2016). This is exacerbated by budget deficits and coordination difficulties between the institutions involved.

When considering four types of costs —reparations, care, legal and productive— it is important to analyse the socio-economic implications of not adopting specific preventative measures to eradicate violence against women, namely the “cost of doing nothing”. One factor to consider is that female salaried workers, for example, do not have time to deal with all of the consequences of violence (such as legal proceedings, medical treatment, job transfers and having to find a new house). It is therefore important to analyse the fiscal cost of measures, such as paid leave for female employees, so that those who are victims of violence have time to come to terms with what happened, and the provision of services, such as priority access to health care.

The multiple manifestations of violence against women and the complex motives that require intersectoral approaches are more evident, for example, when considering the impact on the children of victims of femicide. It is therefore important to draw up budgets that estimate the fiscal cost of implementing some specific and innovative measures that are currently under consideration, such as maintenance payments for minor children whose mother was a victim of femicide.

## **C. AUTONOMY IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES AND THE EXERCISE OF POWER**

*Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership  
at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life  
(Sustainable Development Goal 5, target 5.5)*

### **1. Women's political participation**

Since the first step was taken by Argentina in the 1990s, the implementation of quota or parity laws in the countries of the region (16 in Latin America and 2 in the Caribbean) has resulted in significant increases in the participation of women. This positive scenario is complemented by the situation in countries such as Cuba that have also attained high levels of female participation without adopting specific positive discrimination measures. This path was not always easy. A cycle of reforms of the first quota laws had to be carried out and included in some countries' constitutional reforms as there were no sanctions, which led political systems to develop various ways to circumvent their implementation. In Latin America, the level of women's participation in decision-making processes in the public sector is similar to that of their participation in parliaments, the executive, judicial and legislative branches, and the Supreme Court, with a ceiling of around 25%. The situation is worse in the Caribbean, where women's political participation in national parliaments is 15%.

In order to better understand the phenomenon of female participation in politics and the barriers that remain, analysis will be carried out, based on an eligibility index compiled from official data of all candidates disaggregated by sex. The initial data shows a mixed picture, as although elected women are proportionally less than the number of women candidates in most countries, there are countries, such as Bolivia (Plurinational State of) and Nicaragua, where the situation is reversed, thanks to a high eligibility index, which shows that, given the opportunity, citizens prefer to vote for women to represent them.

This problem not only has an impact on women active in political parties, but also affects the quality of democracy and the link between citizens and their representatives. This issue will really come to the fore when the process to link the Sustainable Development Goals with the regional agenda on gender begins, as that will require strong political will, a budget line and the rapid implementation of policies. Women's experiences of public action should be taken into consideration as a matter of urgency in order to boost progress towards 2030.

Box 8

**Indigenous women's political and civic participation**

Box 9

**Women in international negotiations for development and peace**

## 2. Sustainable development and participation in economic decisions

The ability to make economic decisions is essential to gender equality, and women must participate in these decisions in order to boost sustainable development efforts. However, their participation is low in both the public and private sectors. Only 7 out of 18 Latin American countries have a woman on the boards of their central banks. While there are no official figures for the private sector, some studies indicate that women's participation on the boards of large companies is only around 8%, and of 72 companies only 3 had a female Executive Director (Scuro and Bercovich, 2014). As a result, women's experiences and needs are not given sufficient consideration in decisions, making it difficult to close the existing gender gaps. The private sector has an important role to play in advancing the sustainable development agenda, by using innovation to resolve current problems that are hampering further progress, including greater participation of women in leadership roles and reducing the concentration of female workers in lower-income positions.

## 3. Women's collective action and their contribution to democracy and development

*Encourage Member States to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress, which should draw on contributions from civil society (Paragraph 79, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2015d)*

A crucial factor in the progress made in the region has been the strategic and sustained actions of organized groups of women that represent the broad spectrum of feminism. Civil society in Latin America and the Caribbean has been in the vanguard thanks to knowledge-creation, political participation, advocacy and global and regional activism. "For decades, women from social movements and institutional mechanisms in our region have advocated for effective State action to prevent discrimination in society. The fact that equality now guides government agendas is a triumph for which they can legitimately be considered to be responsible." (Bárcena, in Garrido, 2014).

### Box 10

#### Student movements, new forms of female participation and leadership

## IV. TOWARDS NEW KINDS OF GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES

This section will include innovative suggestions as part of the discussions for a strategic plan to implement the regional agenda on gender resulting from the agreements of the Regional Conferences on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Sustainable Development Goals.

### A. QUALITY, INNOVATIVE POLICIES AT THE CENTRE OF AN INCLUSIVE STATE

The Sustainable Development Goals and the regional agenda on gender pose important questions about whether building and consolidating an inclusive State will produce innovative, first-rate public policies on equality. The big challenge is therefore to break with the past and develop public policy differently,

thereby responding to the interrelated issues concerning sustainable development, inequality gaps and levels of intervention.

Experience shows us that policies that are blind to the inequality between men and women deepen gaps and obstruct the road to development and women's autonomy. Sustainable development must cover gender equality comprehensively, because, otherwise, it cannot be considered either development or sustainable. However, the road followed by Latin America and the Caribbean over the last 40 years shows that the progress made in women's rights and their participation in social, political and economic life is often threatened by setbacks linked to resurgent fundamentalism, economic crises and changes of government. Therefore, in addition to considering how to move forward, steps must be taken to ensure that there is no backsliding and that efforts already undertaken are sustainable.

## **B. INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE FOR GENDER EQUALITY**

### **1. Mechanisms for the advancement of women**

*“Strengthen institutions advocating public policies on gender equality, such as gender machineries and offices for women’s empowerment, by means of legislation and guaranteed, non-transferrable and irreducible budgets and by setting up decision-making bodies at the highest level, and build up their capacity to provide policy guidance on gender equality and women’s empowerment by endowing them with the necessary human and financial resources for a cross-cutting impact on public policies and the structure of the State with a view to devising and implementing de jure and de facto strategies for promoting women’s autonomy and gender equality.”*  
(Paragraph 111, Santo Domingo Consensus)

By adopting the comprehensive agenda on gender at United Nations conferences, the countries of the region have committed to promote gender equality. This agenda is based on the actions and work of mechanisms for the advancement of women. The performance and efficiency of these institutions decides their level within the executive branch hierarchy, while their ability to bring stakeholders together and foster dialogue gives them legitimacy and access to a dedicated budget line. The agreements from the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean highlight the importance of assigning financial, technical and political resources to these mechanisms. Since the 1990s, the proportion of machineries with a high level within the governmental hierarchy has increased from 15% to 60% (ECLAC, 2015e).

### **2. State-wide gender mainstreaming processes**

With a view to long-term development, in addition to providing mechanisms for the advancement of women with material and political resources, it is essential to strengthen the processes for mainstreaming a gender perspective and the leadership of these mechanisms in the processes. To achieve this, the targets of equality, autonomy and women's rights must be an integral part of sectoral goals in coordination with other public bodies and must have the support of civil society.

To move towards structural change with equality, it is essential to recognize that macroeconomic policies are not neutral with regard to gender, which means that specific and transformative measures and actions for gender equality must be integrated into fiscal, industrial, trade and other policies.

**(a) Institutionalization of care policies: a new mainstreaming opportunity**

Today, care policies offer a unique, powerful and new opportunity to mainstream a gender perspective into the development of integrated, cross-cutting systems and, consequently, into all levels of the State. The debate on the social provision of care and the role of policies in this area has moved up the public agenda thanks to the initial impetus from the women's movement and the feminist economy, and, subsequently, the concerns of various stakeholders, academics, policymakers and governments about their impact on the countries' social and economic dynamics (Marco and Rico, 2011). As a concern based on the cultural allocation of care work to women, the use of time and the lack of economic autonomy, it has become a central issue within the debate on social protection, policies and services. From unpaid care work in households, carried out by female family members, interest has extended to paid carers, of whom 94.2% were women in 2010, with the majority employed as paid domestic workers and the rest in the health and education sectors (ECLAC, 2013b).

Care policies are crucial elements in the equation of households' well-being and constitute a new social protection pillar, based on cross-cutting and inalienable rights, that requires a public policy that offers a systematic and integrated response. This moves away from a sectoral and specific focus on the care needs of particular population groups, viewing it instead as a shared problem that concerns the rights and equal treatment of people receiving care and of their caregivers. National institutions that already exist or are being set up should have cross-cutting criteria for gender equality in the public and private spheres.

Box 11

**Urban policies, economic autonomy and caregiving**

**C. DEVELOPMENT, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND RIGHTS PLANS**

Gender equality plans, linked to national gender institutions, are an important example of the work undertaken and vital tools for achieving greater legitimacy and institutionalization. They are also a road map for mainstreaming gender considerations into public policies and a tool for creating inter-institutional and intersectoral links. Analysis of these plans shows that a significant percentage of binding actions are the responsibility of mechanisms for the advancement of women, so, in fact, they are actually a road map for those bodies than for the State as a whole (Benavente, 2016).

National development plans, government policy instruments that set the core concepts and strategies to follow to achieve national social, economic, cultural and industrial development, were first drawn up for the Millennium Development Goals and included some gender considerations. It is hoped that the Sustainable Development Goals will have a greater impact on future plans and, in turn, ensure that the regional agenda on gender is given greater prominence in these plans.

## **D. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT WITH GENDER EQUALITY**

Linking equality plans with planning instruments offers the region a variety of options. Some countries do not link them, as they are of the opinion that planning should be gender neutral or blind to gender inequality, while others have made gender equality targets an integral part of development plans.

As part of the Sustainable Development Goals, their targets and means of implementation, national development plans will be analysed in conjunction with gender equality plans, on the understanding that including a gender perspective into development plans will have a significant impact on achieving the equality targets. In this connection, planning activities carried out by mechanisms for the advancement of women and by the State should be aligned with sustainable development, structural change and equality goals.

### Box 12

#### **The data revolution and tools for designing and monitoring equality policies**

## **E. DIALOGUE AND PACTS AS THE BASIS FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF PUBLIC POLICIES**

*“Any strategy involving radical changes, conflicting interests, resource investment alternatives and tensions between short- and long-term impacts will require covenants”  
(ECLAC, 2012, p. 300)*

The feasibility of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and making strides in gender equality and women’s autonomy depends on establishing agreements and dialogue that will strike a new balance and focus on long-term implementation up to 2030. This will require the involvement of sectors and stakeholders whose mandates do not traditionally include gender equality goals. In this process, negotiations and dialogue, both at the technical and political levels, will be indispensable tools for concluding new equality pacts and ensuring far-reaching political commitments (ECLAC, 2014). The region is at a turning point, where pacts will be vital to redesigning public policy democratically. Their conclusion is part of a participatory process that can be adapted to the specific characteristics of each country. Negotiating pacts strengthens the political viability of a new path for development; drawing up proposals within a broad consultation process bestows legitimacy.

## **F. 2030 HORIZON WITH EQUALITY, AUTONOMY AND RIGHTS**

The document, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Agenda’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and their 169 targets reflect aspects concerning gender equality and women’s autonomy that are explored more broadly, deeply and boldly in the regional agenda. It is hoped that the follow-up indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals that countries will adopt in March 2016 will capture the breadth of the targets and Goals. One of the lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals was that the achievement of the targets for women’s autonomy and gender equality cannot be measured by minimum quantitative indicators alone. To monitor the progress made towards the

targets aimed at subverting structural inequality, based on the gender system and intersectionality of inequality, qualitative information that reflects the changes in power relations at all levels must be collected.

Consequently, it will be essential to promote a systematic link between the follow-up of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Cairo Programme of Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the regional agenda on gender, as articulated in the agreements adopted by the Regional Conferences on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, by fostering synergies to address the structural reasons for gender inequality, and thus move towards fairer and more egalitarian societies and truly sustainable development. This requires recognition of the cumulative nature of the regional agreements and their political and planning value, which, together with the global pacts, will allow States to move from commitments to implementation.

It is therefore essential to introduce a strategic rights-based approach across the agenda. This perspective should not prioritize some women's rights over others, as they are indivisible, and should focus on the interlinked nature of freedoms. The principles of non-discrimination and equality should be linked in order to move towards substantive equality, reversing multiple forms of discrimination against all women. It should also prevent women being seen as a single or homogenous group, and should take into account the various areas of overlap and the need for fair policies that fully recognize women's equal capacities, agency, dignity and rights. A major task facing the governments of the region will be introducing a rights-based approach to achieving all the goals and to bolstering the means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the regional agenda, with the support of civil society and international organizations, as part of a determined effort to connect the short-term goals with a medium- and long-term strategic vision to ensure that "no one is left behind".

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