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**DRAFT REPORT OF THE EIGHTEENTH 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**

(Curacao, Netherlands Antilles, 30 June and 1 July 1994)

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Mandate

1. Paragraph 88, subparagraph 2, of the Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development, adopted in 1977 at the eleventh extraordinary session of the Committee of the Whole of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), stipulates that the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean will be the link between member Governments and the secretariat of ECLAC in the field of women's integration in development.

Place and date of the meeting

2. Pursuant to this mandate, the Presiding Officers who had been elected at the fifth session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean held their eighteenth meeting on 30 June and 1 July 1994 in Curaçao, Netherlands Antilles.

Attendance

3. Attending the meeting were participants from the following countries represented by the Presiding Officers: Argentina, Chile, Cuba, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Venezuela. Also represented at the meeting were the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Inter-American Commission of Women of the Organization of American States (IACW/OAS), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the World Food Programme (WFP). Also participating in the meeting was the representative of non-governmental organizations to the Planning Committee for the Non-Governmental Organizations' Forum. The meeting was chaired by Ms. Edith Strauss, Minister for Women's Affairs of the Netherlands Antilles. Ms. Zelmira Regazzoli, head of the delegation of Argentina, acted as Rapporteur.

Agenda

4. The Presiding Officers adopted the following agenda for their eighteenth meeting:
 1. Adoption of the agenda
 2. Preparations for the sixth session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (Mar del Plata, 26-30 September 1994)
 3. Review of the situation relating to the preparation of national reports
 4. Preparations by non-governmental organizations
 5. Other matters.

B. SUMMARY OF DEBATES

5. The Director of ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean welcomed the participants in the meeting of the Presiding Officers, and in particular its Chairman, Ms. Edith Strauss, who was replacing Ms. Liberia Peters. The work cycle that would culminate in the convening of the sixth session of the Regional Conference had been a very active one for both ECLAC and the Presiding Officers.
6. The Commission's further development of its proposal on changing production patterns with social equity had many points in common with the analysis of the situation of women in the region. He emphasized the importance of the gender perspective and the need to start designing policies aimed at both improving women's living conditions and promoting their participation in society. Lastly, he stressed the Commission's increasing coordination with various United Nations agencies at the regional level and the valuable contribution of the Presiding Officers to the activities of ECLAC.
7. The Chairman said that her country was pleased to host the last meeting of the Presiding Officers' current work cycle, which had also begun in the Netherlands Antilles, and that the next group of Presiding Officers should adopt measures to change and improve their work methods.

Preparations for the sixth session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (Mar del Plata, 26-30 September 1994) (agenda item 2)

8. The Chief of the ECLAC Women and Development Unit briefly summarized the Commission's preparations for the sixth session of the Regional Conference.
9. The representative of Argentina explained that the Conference would meet in Mar del Plata instead of Buenos Aires in order to facilitate contacts with the communications media. She then described the logistical aspects of the meeting and the facilities to be provided, which would be prepared so as to accommodate the largest possible number of participants. She would send ECLAC all the necessary

information so that the secretariat could inform the countries of the steps to be taken prior to the event, such as visa formalities and hotel arrangements.

10. She asked that the date of the opening meeting of the session should be changed so that the President of the Argentine Republic could attend. Should that proposal be accepted, the session would begin on Sunday, 25 September.

11. The delegates of countries represented by the Presiding Officers congratulated the representative of Argentina on the efforts made in her country to prepare for the sixth session of the Regional Conference, and expressed their satisfaction with the measures taken regarding contacts with the communications media and the facilities in which the event would be held. A number of participants agreed that the attendance of Heads of State from the countries of the region at the opening ceremony would give political backing to the Conference; however, it must be borne in mind that the Conference already had an identity of its own and that possible changes in the schedule of activities should not result in the loss of a working day. They therefore asked the representative of Argentina to confirm any changes with the secretariat well in advance.

12. It was suggested that the delegations sent to the meeting by the countries should include members of the committees that had worked on the preparation of national reports, and it was recommended that ECLAC should convey that suggestion to the Governments.

13. The representative of ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean reported on the Caribbean Subregional Meeting Preparatory to the World Conference on Women, organized by ECLAC, the Caribbean Community and UNIFEM. The countries members of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) and two of its associate members had participated in that meeting; most of them had presented national reports of excellent quality, thereby demonstrating the strong interest which the World Conference had awakened in the subregion.

14. The participation of the Prime Ministers and Presidents of the countries of the Caribbean subregion in the sixth session of the Regional Conference could be very fruitful; she suggested that the Under-Secretary-General of CARICOM should also be invited, in view of the importance of that Caribbean institution. Distinguished personalities from the Caribbean could also be asked to attend.

15. The representative of ECLAC subregional headquarters in Mexico reported on the preparations for the Central American subregional meeting, which was being organized by ECLAC and UNIFEM in collaboration with UNICEF and Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. National preparations had been delayed somewhat by the fact that four new Presidents had taken office in Central America in recent months; the participants in the subregional meeting would therefore focus on drafting the country reports and considering the Regional Programme of Action, with a view to adopting a joint position that would be presented at Mar del Plata.

16. The representative of Mexico said her country was concerned about the possible proliferation of mechanisms that carried out activities related to women, and therefore welcomed the excellent idea of organizing two subregional meetings, one immediately following the other, through coordination among ECLAC, UNIFEM and UNICEF. That coordination would give the countries a broader view of the situation and would help them to follow up on preparations so as to arrive at the Mar del Plata meeting better prepared.

17. The representative of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) reported on the measures taken and research conducted on female food producers by IICA, in conjunction with 18 Latin American and Caribbean Governments. Those studies had been used *inter alia* to determine the contribution of women to domestic agricultural product; the data compiled showed that the economically active population not counted as such in the countries studied amounted to nearly 8 million women, whose contribution to the economy was invisible. She hoped that the topic of women in rural areas would be analysed at the Mar del Plata meeting and would be taken into consideration in the Regional Programme of Action.

18. The representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) said she was pleased with the preparations for the sixth session of the Regional Conference, which represented a significant step forward in terms of coordination among the organizations of the United Nations system and thereby exerted a positive influence on the analysis of women's situation in the region. Those preparations included the activities of the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Government Offices for Women, the dissemination of information at meetings of the Latin American Parliament and the Andean Parliament, in collaboration with UNIFEM, and the joint efforts of UNICEF and UNIFEM to organize a network of journalists to cover preparations for the Mar del Plata meeting from the gender perspective.

19. The representative of the Inter-American Commission of Women of the Organization of American States (IACW/OAS) reminded the Presiding Officers that her institution would hold its preparatory meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women from 19 to 22 September 1994 at Mar del Plata. Participants in the meeting would analyse the IACW Plan of Action, which had been adopted by the General Assembly of OAS, and would consider the country reports being drafted in order to avoid the duplication of efforts and outputs. IACW was primarily interested in the institutional strengthening of national mechanisms. It would participate in the meeting of First Ladies of the region, which would be held from 11 to 13 October 1994 in Saint Lucia.

20. The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, which had been drafted by IACW, had been adopted unanimously by the countries members of OAS and had already been ratified by 10 countries of the region.

21. The representatives of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) said they were interested in establishing effective links between Governments and the organizations of the United Nations system to take full advantage of the latter's experience with activities related to women. Their organizations had received a mandate to integrate the gender perspective into all of their activities and to report to the Governments on the availability of funding for preparations for the World Conference on Women and the World Summit for Social Development. Once they received proposals from the countries, they would supply human resources, information and funds for those preparations.

22. The representative of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) presented the Agenda for Action adopted at the regional forum "Women in the Americas", held at Guadalajara, Mexico, in April 1994. The fact that many countries had participated in the forum lent legitimacy to that document in the region. She suggested that the Presiding Officers should consider how they could apply the recommendations of the forum to their activities and that they should explore the possibility of incorporating the Agenda's more specific proposals into the Regional Programme of Action.

23. The Chief of the ECLAC Women and Development Unit explained that the Regional Conference would consider the Regional Programme of Action, which had been published as a note by the secretariat and had been sent to the countries for analysis. The core issues of the World Summit for Social Development had been incorporated into the latest version of the Programme in order to promote the inclusion of the topic of women in the conclusions of the Summit and to place greater emphasis on the issue of social integration. The conclusions of the Caribbean Subregional Meeting Preparatory to the World Conference on Women stressed issues of particular interest in the subregion, such as women heads of household, but did not otherwise differ from the Programme of Action.

24. The participants agreed to postpone the analysis of the Regional Programme of Action until the sixth session of the Regional Conference, when the national reports would be presented by the countries and would constitute inputs for the debate. It was recommended that the countries should be asked to send their comments and observations to ECLAC as soon as possible, so that the secretariat could present them at the Mar del Plata meeting.

Review of the situation relating to the preparation of national reports (agenda item 3)

25. The Chief of the ECLAC Women and Development Unit told the Presiding Officers that although the secretariat had received few national reports to date, it understood that the countries were proceeding on schedule with their preparation. She then summarized the format in which the secretariat would present the reports that were received by the established deadline.

26. The Presiding Officers reviewed the process of producing national reports in their countries and agreed that the baseline study of the regional situation, which was being prepared at the same time, had two objectives: to promote the maintenance of the mechanisms with which it had been carried out, and to identify areas in which more information was needed. Among the valuable results of the preparations for the next session of the Regional Conference and the Fourth World Conference on Women were the relations and coordination established among Governments, non-governmental organizations and political organizations, which made it easier to build consensus among the countries' citizens.

27. Some delegations pointed out that the process of preparing the reports also offered an opportunity to improve the countries' institutional structure. Most of the countries represented had received significant support from international organizations, especially UNIFEM, UNICEF and IACW, in preparing their reports.

28. After congratulating the countries on the work they had accomplished, the representative of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) stressed the participatory nature of the process of preparing the reports. UNIFEM was willing to provide support for the organization of special events in collaboration with Governments or other international bodies.

29. The representative of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) said that her institution was preparing reports on national objectives, based on the objectives identified in the national reports. The region's Governments, for their part, should take the measures needed to achieve those objectives.

Preparations by non-governmental organizations (agenda item 4)

30. The representative of the region's non-governmental organizations to the Planning Committee of the Non-Governmental Organizations' Forum explained that the preparations of such organizations had focused on two activities related to the Mar del Plata meeting: the production of quality documents and the promotion of processes of reflection in the institutions that made up the women's movement. In addition to participating in the preparation of national reports, non-governmental organizations had decided to produce, in each country, their own document structured around the three themes of the World Conference —equality, development and peace—, which were also reflected in the issues to be analysed at the Forum: democracy, citizenship and political participation; sustainable development, structural adjustment and poverty; and participation and domestic and social violence.

31. She then reported on the activities being carried out in the subregions (the Caribbean, Central America, the Southern Cone and the Andean region) and in selected countries (Brazil and Mexico) to help coordinate the preparations of non-governmental organizations. Those activities would culminate in the convening of six subregional meetings, whose conclusions would be combined into a single document that would be presented at Mar del Plata. The mass dissemination of preparations for the sixth session of the Regional Conference had already begun, with the publication of a bulletin every two months in collaboration with FEMPRESS and Isis International, but the bulletin was being produced in Spanish only because no funds were available to have it translated into English for distribution in the Caribbean.

32. In conclusion, she stressed the importance of proper coordination among non-governmental and international organizations and of distributing those organizations' documents in all the subregions. The mechanism for participation by non-governmental organizations in the Mar del Plata meeting must be clearly defined, in order to facilitate the debates.

Other matters (agenda item 5)

33. The participants from the countries represented by the Presiding Officers analysed three issues: the meetings of First Ladies and their link with the Presiding Officers, the relationship between the agendas of those meetings and the objectives of the United Nations, and mechanisms for linkage with government offices for women. After noting the value of the work done by the offices of the First Ladies, as well as the latter's drawing power, the participants concluded that no single coordination mechanism could be proposed for all the countries because the features of such mechanisms would depend on each Government. Therefore, they agreed that the Presiding Officers should concentrate on improving the functioning of the institutional structure in general.

Annex

**AGREEMENTS ADOPTED AT THE EIGHTEENTH 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**

1. To ask ECLAC to send to the Governments: a) information on obtaining visas to enter Argentina and on hotel arrangements for participants in the meeting; b) the Presiding Officers' suggestions on the composition of the national delegations, which are in no way binding on the countries; and c) the Presiding Officers' request that the countries send their comments and observations on the Regional Programme of Action to ECLAC as soon as possible.
2. To suggest that ECLAC prepare a summary of the comments it receives on the Regional Programme of Action prior to the sixth session of the Regional Conference.
3. To ask the ECLAC secretariat to formulate recommendations on how the Presiding Officers can oversee the implementation of the Regional Programme of Action to be adopted at the sixth session of the Regional Conference and serve as an effective mechanism for liaison with the countries.