

LC/L/107

SEVENTH SESSION OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE

on the Integration
of Women
into the Economic
and Social
Development
of Latin America
and the Caribbean

Santiago, Chile,
19 - 21 November 1997

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



UNITED NATIONS

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

SEVENTH SESSION OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE

**on the Integration
of Women
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UNITED NATIONS

LC/L. 1074
November 1997

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- 1. WHAT IS THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE?** The Regional Conference is a subsidiary body of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) which is convened on a regular, ongoing basis at intervals of no more than three years. Its purposes are to identify women's needs at the regional and subregional levels, present recommendations, undertake periodic assessments of the activities carried out in fulfilment of regional and international plans and agreements on the subject, and serve as a forum for debates on relevant issues.



**Permanent auxiliary bodies
of ECLAC**

The Commission, which holds a session once every two years, has established the

following permanent bodies:

- Committee of the Whole
- Committee of High-level Government Experts
- Central American Economic Cooperation Committee
- Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee
- Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean
- Regional Council for Planning

To date, the States members¹ of ECLAC have held six regional conferences on the integration of women into the economic and social development of Latin America and the Caribbean in the following locations: Havana (1977), Macuto, Venezuela (1979), Mexico City (1983), Guatemala City (1988), Curaçao (1991) and Mar del Plata, Argentina (1994). In addition, in 1984 in Havana, the member States held the Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean in Preparation for the World Conference

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to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, which was held in Nairobi in 1985.

2.

WHO CONVENES THE SESSIONS OF THE CONFERENCE?

ECLAC has been given the mandate² to convene the member States to sessions of the Regional Conference.

In accordance with the corresponding regulations, no later than six weeks prior to each session of the Regional Conference, the Executive Secretary of ECLAC sends out invitations to the member countries and associate members of the Commission to participate in the deliberations. Other States Members of the United Nations and representatives of other bodies and programmes forming part of the United Nations system are invited to attend as observers, as are representatives of intergovernmental organizations and of non-governmental organizations enjoying consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, and special guests.

3.

WHERE ARE THE SESSIONS OF THE CONFERENCE HELD?

Generally, a member country of ECLAC offers to host the conference. On this occasion, the Government of Chile will



host the meeting, which is to be held from 19 to 21 November 1997 in the city of Santiago.

4. WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE?

At the seventh session of the Regional Conference, the progress achieved in the region since the preceding session and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) is to be assessed and recommendations are to be presented regarding ways in which the process of change in this area may be expedited in accordance with the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001.

5. WHO ATTENDS THE SESSIONS OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE?

The sessions of the Regional Conference are attended by representatives of the member States and associate members of ECLAC and, as observers, by representatives of States holding consultative status.³

In addition, the sessions are attended by observers from United Nations programmes and bodies,⁴ the specialized agencies and other autonomous organizations within the system,⁵ intergovernmental

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organizations,⁶ and non-governmental organizations holding category I or category II consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. In the interests of the member States, ECLAC has also traditionally invited other institutions to attend which are in a position to provide valuable inputs in their fields; in extending such invitations, priority is given to regional or subregional organizations.

6. WHO ARE THE PRESIDING OFFICERS OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE?

The Commission elects Presiding Officers at the beginning of each session of the Regional Conference. The Heads of Delegation are summoned to a meeting

which is held prior to the opening of the regular session for this purpose. The Presiding Officers usually include a Chairperson (this office is usually held by the host country), two Vice-Chairpersons and a Rapporteur. The members chosen to serve as Presiding Officers continue to do so until their successors are elected.⁷

The member States elect the Presiding Officers for each session of the Conference based on the principles of rotation of duties and of adequate representation of the various subregions.⁸ In order to maintain a permanent mechanism for action in relation to women's issues, it was established in the



Regional Plan of Action that the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference would continue their work during the intervals between sessions of the Conference would serve as a liaison between the Governments and the secretariat of ECLAC with regard to the integration of women into development.⁹ Accordingly, the Presiding Officers have met twice each year and have therefore held 25 such meetings since 1978.

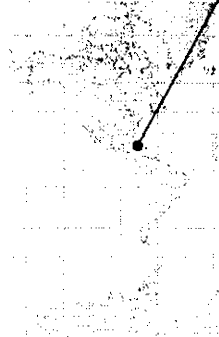
In addition, at the twenty-second meeting of the Presiding Officers, the States represented by the Officers elected at the sixth session of the Regional Conference agreed to serve as a direct liaison with specified countries for informational and promotional purposes.¹⁰

**7. WHICH COUNTRIES
HAVE BEEN
REPRESENTED BY THE
PRESIDING OFFICERS?**

The Presiding Officers for the sessions of the Regional Conference have been as follows:

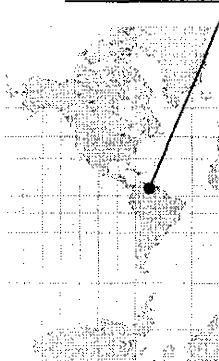
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First session
Havana, 1977



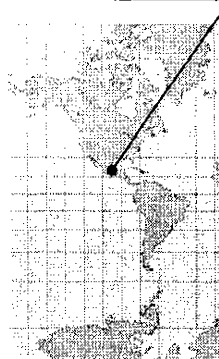
Chairperson:
• Cuba
Vice-Chairpersons:
• Jamaica
• Mexico
Rapporteur:
• Venezuela

Second session
Macuto, Venezuela, 1979



Chairperson:
• Venezuela
Vice-Chairpersons:
• Brazil
• Colombia
• Cuba
• Jamaica
• Mexico
• Uruguay
Rapporteur:
• Costa Rica

Third session
Mexico City, 1983



Chairperson:
• Mexico
Vice-Chairpersons:
• Ecuador
• Guyana
• Panama
Rapporteur:
• Argentina

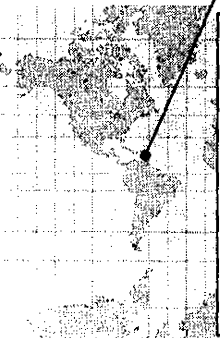


Fourth session
Guatemala City, 1988



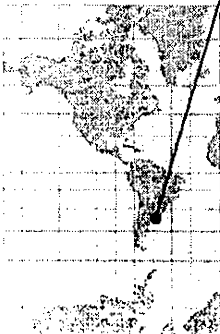
Chairperson:
•Guatemala
Vice-Chairpersons:
•Netherlands Antilles
•Argentina
•Cuba
Rapporteur:
•Venezuela

Fifth session
Curacao, 1991



Chairperson:
•Netherlands Antilles
Vice-Chairpersons:
•Cuba
•Chile
•Guatemala
•Mexico
•Saint Kitts and Nevis
•Venezuela
Rapporteur:
•Argentina

Sixth session
Mar del Plata, Argentina, 1994



Chairperson:
•Argentina
Vice-Chairpersons:
•Netherlands Antilles
•Barbados
•Bolivia
•Chile
•Cuba
•Ecuador
•Honduras
•Uruguay
Rapporteur:
•Mexico

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8. WHAT ISSUES WILL BE CONSIDERED AT THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE?

Before drawing up the agenda, the Presiding Officers undertook a comprehensive analysis of the priority issues, taking into consideration the following factors:

8.1. Strategic areas identified in the Regional Programme of Action:

- I. Gender equity
- II. Economic and social development with a gender perspective: women's equitable share in the decisions, responsibilities and benefits of development
- III. Elimination of poverty among women
- IV. Women's equitable participation in decision-making and in the exercise of power in public and private life
- V. Human rights, peace and violence
- VI. Shared family responsibilities
- VII. Recognition of cultural plurality in the region
- VIII. International support and cooperation

☾ 8.2. Strategic objectives identified in the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing:¹¹

- A. Women and poverty
- B. Education and training of women
- C. Women and health
- D. Violence against women
- E. Women and armed conflict
- F. Women and the economy
- G. Women in power and decision-making
- H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women
- I. Human rights of women
- J. Women and the media
- K. Women and the environment
- L. The girl child

☾ 8.3. Critical areas of concern identified by the Commission on the Status of Women for consideration at its sessions:

- ☾ 1996: -Women and poverty (Platform for Action, chapter IV.A)
- Women and the media (Platform for Action, chapter IV.J)
- The care of children and dependents,

including the distribution of responsibilities between men and women (Platform for Action, various chapters)

- 1997: -Education and training of women (Platform for Action, chapter IV.B)
 - Women and the economy (Platform for Action, chapter IV.F)
 - Women in power and decision-making (Platform for Action, chapter IV.G)
 - Women and the environment (Platform for Action, chapter IV.K)

- 1998: -Violence against women (Platform for Action, chapter IV.D)
 - Women and armed conflict (Platform for Action, chapter IV.E)
 - Human rights of women (Platform for Action, chapter IV.I)
 - The girl child (Platform for Action, chapter IV.L)

- 1999: -Women and health (Platform for Action, chapter IV.C)
 - Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women (Platform for Action, chapter IV.H)
 - Initiation of the comprehensive review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action.



- ☪ 2000: -Comprehensive quinquennial review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action
- Emerging issues

Based on these considerations, at their twenty-fourth meeting, held in Mexico City on 27-28 May 1997, the Presiding Officers agreed to propose the following provisional agenda for the seventh session of the Conference:¹²

1. Election of officers
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Activities of the ECLAC secretariat and the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean since the sixth session of the Regional Conference
4. Access to power and participation in decision-making. Latin America and the Caribbean: policies for gender equity looking to the year 2000
5. Sustainable development, poverty and

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gender. Latin America and the Caribbean:
working towards the year 2000

6. Consideration and adoption of the
Conference agreements
7. Other matters

The Presiding Officers also agreed to mark the twentieth anniversary of the first session of the Regional Conference and the adoption of the Regional Plan of Action, and the fiftieth anniversary of the Commission on the Status of Women.

9.

WHO PREPARES THE DOCUMENTS FOR THE CONFERENCE?

The position papers for the Conference are prepared by the secretariat of ECLAC and are sent to the countries at least six weeks in advance in order to facilitate the deliberations. The two documents that will serve as a basis for the debates to be held at this session are entitled "Access to power and participation in decision-making. Latin America and the Caribbean: policies for gender equity looking to the year 2000" (LC/L.1063(CRM.7/4)) and "Sustainable development, poverty and gender. Latin America and the Caribbean: working towards the year 2000" (LC/L.1064(CRM.7/5)).

It is hoped that the various countries' contributions to the work of the Conference will



address the problems faced by women in these areas and propose possible means of overcoming those difficulties. Member States will also be asked to provide a summary of no more than five pages in length to facilitate the debate.

The secretariat will also present other background papers for the Conference. All of these documents will be prepared by ECLAC in collaboration with other United Nations bodies or academic institutions of the region.

- 10. HOW WILL THE SESSION BE ORGANIZED?** Following the election of the President Officers, the participants will meet in plenary on the first day of the session to analyse the activities that have been carried out, peruse the documentation and organize the work to be conducted. On the second day and the morning of the third, two working groups will meet and will analyse each of the subjects submitted to the Conference for consideration. The Presiding Officers have divided up the subjects for presentation.¹³

11. OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED IN RECENT DECADES

- ☾ **Regional level** In 1973, ECLAC spearheaded the growing concern about women's issues, adopting resolution 321(XV) on the "Participation of women in Latin American development" at its fifteenth session, held in Quito. The secretariat was also asked to prepare a number of studies on the status of women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

- ☾ **International level** In 1974, the Commission on the Status of Women decided to convene a world conference in Mexico City in 1975 to mark International Women's Year.

- ☾ **Regional level** In 1975, the first baseline studies on the subject were presented at a regional seminar for Latin America on the integration of women into development, with special emphasis on demographic factors (Caracas, May 1975). The report issued by this seminar was submitted to ECLAC for consideration at its sixteenth session (Port of Spain, May 1975). A compilation of studies and reports served as the basis for the book entitled



Mujeres en América Latina: aportes para una discusión,
which ECLAC presented at the first World Conference.

- **International level** In 1975 the first meeting at the international level, the World Conference of the International Women's Year, was held in Mexico City. Its objectives were as follows:
 - a) to evaluate the performance of the United Nations system with respect to the implementation of the recommendations formulated by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;
 - b) to analyse new ways of promoting women's full participation in the development process, with particular attention to women in rural areas;
 - c) to develop a plan of action for enhancing the contribution of women to the achievement of the objectives of the Second United Nations Development Decade; and
 - d) to recognize women's contribution to the attainment of world peace. The World Conference concluded with the adoption of a World Plan of Action.

- **Regional level** In 1977 the Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development was adopted at the first session of the Regional Conference and was ratified at the eleventh special session of the ECLAC Committee of the Whole.

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- ☾ **International level** In December 1979, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- ☾ **Regional level** In 1979, the second session of the Regional Conference was held in Macuto, Venezuela. During the session the participants evaluated the progress made towards fulfilling the Regional Plan of Action and drew up recommendations in that connection.
- ☾ **International level** In 1980, the second international meeting, the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, was held in Copenhagen. The Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women was approved on this occasion.
- ☾ **Regional level** In 1983, the third session of the Regional Conference was held in Mexico City. At that session the participants evaluated the progress made towards fulfilling the Regional Plan of Action, formulated recommendations in that regard and embarked upon



activities at the regional level in preparation for the World Conference to be held in Nairobi.

- **Regional level** In 1984, the Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean in Preparation for the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women was held in Havana. This preparatory meeting was organized by the Branch for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and the secretariat of ECLAC.

- **International level** In 1985 the first edition of the *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development* was published.

- **International level** In 1985 the third international meeting, the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women, was held in Nairobi for the purpose of developing specific action proposals. The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women were adopted at the Conference.

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- ☾ **Regional level** In **1988** the fourth session of the Regional Conference was held in Guatemala City. Among other matters, the participants analysed the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and their implementation at the national, subregional and regional levels.

- ☾ **International level** In **1990** General Assembly resolution 45/129, Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/12 and Commission on the Status of Women resolution 36/8A on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and preparations for the sixth world conference, including the Platform for Action, were adopted.

- ☾ **Regional level** In **1991** the fifth session of the Regional Conference was held in Curaçao. In one of the resolutions adopted at that session, the Regional Conference affirmed that “the changes experienced by the region since then [since the adoption of the Regional Plan of Action in 1977] have been radical ones, requiring an analysis of the future from a new perspective, including a reorientation of concepts and programmes relating to women”. Accordingly, it recommended that a new regional plan of action for the integration of women into Latin American and Caribbean economic and



social development should be prepared to serve as a new regional instrument in preparation for the world conference in 1995.

- ☪ **Regional level** In 1994 the sixth session of the Regional Conference was held in Mar del Plata, Argentina. The Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001 (see page 9) was approved at the Conference, which also served as a preparatory meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women.

- ☪ **International level** In 1995 the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace was held in Beijing. The Platform for Action was approved at this meeting.

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ACTIVITIES OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS RELATED TO THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE

☾ Meeting: "Women and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean"

This meeting is being organized by the NGO Initiative Group of Chile and is to be held on 18 November 1997 at ECLAC headquarters. The meeting will focus on the following issues:

- i) access to power and participation in decision-making,
- ii) sustainable development, poverty and gender, and
- iii) women's human rights.



NOTES

1.- The States members of ECLAC are: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Spain, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay and Venezuela.

The following territories are associate members of ECLAC: Anguilla, Aruba, British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, Puerto Rico and United States Virgin Islands.



- 2.- The mandates received by ECLAC regarding activities oriented towards the women of the region are primarily set forth in the *Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development (E/CEPAL/1042/Rev.1)*, which was adopted by the member States at the eleventh special meeting of the Committee of the Whole of ECLAC on 21 November 1977 and in the *Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001 (LC/G.1855)*, which was approved by the member States at the sixth session of the Regional Conference and adopted by resolution 558 (XXVI) at the twenty-sixth session of ECLAC.
- 3.- States Members of the United Nations which do not belong to the Commission and States which are not members of the United Nations, including the Holy See and Switzerland, hold consultative status and attend the sessions as observers.
- 4.- United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and World Food Programme (WFP).
- 5.- These institutions include the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), International Fund

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for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Labour Organization (ILO) and World Health Organization/Pan American Health Organization (WHO/PAHO).

- 6.- Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW), Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Latin American Social Sciences Council (CLACSO), Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Inter-American Institute of Human Rights (IIDH), Organization of American States (OAS), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Latin American Parliament.
- 7.- ECLAC, *Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean* (LC/G.1403/Rev.3), Santiago, Chile, 1990, chapter IV, rule 16.
- 8.- See ECLAC, Report of the fifth 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 (E/CEPAL/CRM.3/L.2), Mexico City, 1983, conclusions, paragraph 11.
- 9.- See ECLAC, *Regional Plan of Action...*, op. cit., chapter IV, article 88, paragraph 2.



10.- Cuba, Netherlands Antilles and Barbados have taken responsibility for the English-speaking Caribbean, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico; Chile has done so for Brazil and Colombia; Mexico and Honduras for Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama; Argentina for Paraguay; Bolivia and Ecuador for Peru; and Uruguay for Venezuela. This distribution was modified at the twenty-fourth meeting of the Presiding Officers in accordance with the needs of the Conference.

11.- The Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 is "an agenda for women's empowerment. It aims at accelerating the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and at removing all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making".

The Platform proposes measures for adoption by the Governments of the States Members of the United Nations, the private sector, intergovernmental organizations, the specialized agencies of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international cooperation agencies.

12.- See ECLAC, *Report of the twenty-fourth 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* (LC/L.1061(MDM.24/3)), Mexico City, 27-28 May 1997, paragraph 16.

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13.- Argentina and Mexico will be responsible for presenting the document on access to power. Honduras and Cuba will present the document on sustainable development, poverty and gender.

