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**REPORT OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH MEETING OF THE PRESIDING
OFFICERS OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN
IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

(Santiago, Chile, 13-14 July 1998)

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place and date of the meeting

1. The Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean held their twenty-sixth meeting on 13 and 14 July 1998 at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago, Chile.

Attendance¹

2. The meeting was attended by delegates from the following ECLAC member countries and associate members represented by the Presiding Officers: Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles, Paraguay and Venezuela. Representatives of the following United Nations programmes and specialized agencies were also in attendance: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), International Labour Organization (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The meeting was also attended by representatives of the Inter-American Commission of Women of the Organization of American States (IACW/OAS), the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) and the ECLAC subregional headquarters in Mexico.

Chairperson and rapporteur

3. The meeting was chaired by the Minister-Director of the National Women's Service of Chile, Josefina Bilbao, Chairperson of the Presiding Officers. The duties of rapporteur were performed by the delegation of Mexico, which was headed by Ambassador Aída González, Coordinator for Women's Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico.

Documentation

4. The representatives had before them the following documents: Annotations to the provisional agenda (LC/L.1125(MDM.26/2)); Report of the seventh session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/G.2016(CRM.7/7)); Statement by the Minister-Director of the

¹ See annex.

National Women's Service of Chile (SERNAM), Ms. Josefina Bilbao, at the twenty-seventh session of ECLAC; Draft report of the twenty-seventh session of ECLAC; The fiscal covenant. Strengths, weaknesses, challenges (LC/G.1997(SES.27/3)); Informe de la reunión sobre estrategia de institucionalización del enfoque de género en el trabajo sustantivo de la CEPAL (LC/L.1088); Estudio-consulta para el desarrollo de una estrategia de institucionalización del enfoque de género en el trabajo sustantivo de la CEPAL (LC/R.1813); Women in water-related processes in Latin America. Proposals for research and policies (Stockholm, August 1998). Summary of the paper to be presented by the officer-in-charge of the Women and Development Unit; Proceso de institucionalización del enfoque de género en la CEPAL. Experiencias sectoriales (a document prepared by the officer-in-charge of the Women and Development Unit); Address given by the Executive Secretary of ECLAC at the international seminar on macroeconomics, gender and the State (Cartagena, Colombia, 5 July 1998); La situación de la mujer en zonas rurales en Chile. Un diagnóstico sobre campesinas y asalariadas agrícolas en situación económica precaria (LC/R.1821); Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001 (LC/G.1855); Platform for Action contained in the report of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/CONF.177/20/Rev.1).

B. AGENDA

5. The Presiding Officers adopted the following agenda for their twenty-sixth meeting:
 1. Adoption of the agenda.
 2. Progress report by the Chairperson, in particular regarding the implementation of the resolution adopted by the Regional Conference at its seventh session on activities in follow-up to the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001.
 3. Follow-up to United Nations world conferences and summits and their provisions regarding the mainstreaming of the gender perspective.
 4. Review of the activities of the Presiding Officers and of the ECLAC secretariat since the twenty-fifth meeting of the Presiding Officers, including evaluation of the seventh session of the Regional Conference.
 5. Review of the follow-up to the Regional Programme of Action, in particular in strategic areas not considered at the seventh session of the Regional Conference.
 6. Activities of the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session, particularly follow-up to the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

7. Planned activities of the Presiding Officers and of the ECLAC secretariat.
8. Other matters.

C. OPENING MEETING

6. The Deputy Executive Secretary of ECLAC welcomed the participants and drew their attention to the importance of the liaison functions performed by the Presiding Officers and their role in providing a communications channel and a forum for the debate of public policies for the advancement of women. Referring to the main activities carried out since the seventh session of the Regional Conference, he referred to the fact that at the twenty-seventh session of ECLAC a proposal had been approved for the inclusion of a subprogramme in the Commission's programme of work for 2000-2001 to promote the mainstreaming of the gender perspective, which entailed an expansion of the functions performed by the Women and Development Unit. The speaker also noted that ECLAC had embarked upon a review of its institutional capacity for mainstreaming the gender dimension in its substantive activities in a visible, cross-disciplinary manner.

7. After recalling that Ms. Miriam Krawczyk had stepped down as Chief of the Women and Development Unit so that she could assume her new post as Director of the Programme Planning and Operations Division of ECLAC, the Deputy Executive Secretary spoke of the valuable work that had been done in the 10 years during which she had directed the Unit. Her contribution had not only been of vital importance in institutionalizing the gender perspective within ECLAC, but also in establishing mechanisms for maintaining a free-flowing, solid relationship with the Governments. Most importantly of all, she had put her stamp on the work of the Unit by maintaining a level of professionalism that was recognized by all.

8. The Chairperson of the Presiding Officers expressed her gratitude for the presence of the delegates and of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the host country, which underscored the importance that the Government of Chile attributed to women's issues, as well as the hospitality and unswerving support of ECLAC. She noted that during the meeting they would undertake the first assessment of the progress made in acting upon the recommendations set forth in the Santiago Consensus and then referred briefly to the other items on the agenda. Special emphasis was placed on the fact that a widespread awareness had been attained of the need to overcome all the obstacles standing in the way of women's full integration into the development process on an equal footing in order for the achievement of a sustainable form of economic and human development to be possible. The countries of the region needed to strengthen their presence in the United Nations and other international bodies since, in a globalized world, the universality of the position of women demanded that they join forces and marshal their creativity in order to put an end to sex discrimination in all spheres of social, economic, political and cultural affairs.

9. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chile said that the present decade would surely be remembered as a time when the multilateral system had mounted a determined effort to address

the major issues affecting humanity, and particularly its most vulnerable members, since globalization was no longer confined to the sphere of economics but had become a social phenomenon as well. More specifically, a number of conferences had been held in recent years that had demonstrated an awareness of the fact that the scope of many social problems extended beyond national borders and that those problems therefore needed to be addressed at the regional and world levels. Follow-up to these conferences, in which an enormous number of women had participated, was highly important since it was the only way to ensure that the resolutions adopted at those meetings were acted upon. In closing, the Minister spoke about how gratifying it was to note the determination with which the region had undertaken those follow-up activities, and wished the Presiding Officers every success in their deliberations.

10. The representative of Mexico observed how well Ms. Krawczyk grasped the situation of women in general and spoke of her professionalism, her keen awareness of the multisectoral nature of women's issues in the region and her skill as a negotiator, which had invariably enabled her to contribute to the achievement of a consensus in the international forums in which she took part and to encourage the participation and coordination of all the various groups and bodies concerned with these questions. It was largely due to her contribution that Latin America and the Caribbean now had a regional programme of action. The representative went on to thank Ms. Krawczyk for having put together such an excellent team and for the support that she would continue to provide for the women's cause in her new post, in which the representative wished her continuing success.

D. SUMMARY OF THE PROCEEDINGS

Progress report by the Chairperson, in particular regarding the implementation of the resolution adopted by the Regional Conference at its seventh session on activities in follow-up to the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001 (agenda item 2)

11. The Chairperson of the Presiding Officers briefly reviewed her involvement in the twenty-seventh session of ECLAC, held the preceding May in Aruba, and spoke about some of the resolutions that had been adopted at that time which were closely related to the question of the advancement of women. Acting upon the instructions given to her by the Presiding Officers, she had also presented the text of the Santiago Consensus and had drawn attention to its main components and tenets. The Commission had proceeded to adopt the Consensus, which would undoubtedly contribute to the effort being made to combat gender discrimination in all the countries of the region.

Follow-up to United Nations world conferences and summits and their provisions regarding the mainstreaming of the gender perspective (agenda item 3)

12. The representative of Chile reviewed the major international summit meetings and conferences held since 1990, which represented a collective effort to define and identify common

problems and to arrive at solutions for them. Standing committees had been established to facilitate the follow-up work, and in 1998 the Economic and Social Council had held a special session on integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of the major United Nations conferences and summits in which all the relevant administrative bodies, funds and programmes of the United Nations and multilateral financial institutions had participated.

13. The representative also reported that the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, which had been created in 1996, had been mandated to ensure effective coordination and cooperation in the implementation of the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, together with the recommendations of international conferences on issues of concern to women, and in the mainstreaming of the gender perspective within the United Nations system. At the intergovernmental level, follow-up to the Fourth World Conference was the responsibility of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women of the United Nations; the latter had also begun to act as a preparatory committee for the five-year review, to be held in the year 2000, of the implementation of the agreements that had been reached. It had therefore structured its sessions on the basis of the main issues addressed in the Platform. Accordingly, in 1998 it would analyse the questions of violence against women, women and armed conflicts, women's human rights and the situation of the girl child; in 1999, it would consider the issues of women and health and of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women.

Review of the activities of the Presiding Officers and of the ECLAC secretariat since the twenty-fifth meeting of the Presiding Officers, including evaluation of the seventh session of the Regional Conference (agenda item 4)

14. The participants agreed that the system of assigning the presentations on the subjects to be addressed by the Regional Conference to certain countries had worked out well and should continue to be used in the future.

15. The Presiding Officers, with the exception of the representative of Brazil, submitted reports on the situation in their countries. The representative of El Salvador had sent a report in which she referred to the situation both in her country and in the other Central American nations. Subjects common to all the reports included the reinforcement of institutional mechanisms dealing with women's affairs, the steps taken to combat domestic violence and violence against women, and the adoption of a gender perspective in various spheres of activity.

16. The officer-in-charge of the Women and Development Unit discussed the importance of the joint presentation made by the Unit and the Presiding Officers at the most recent session of ECLAC. That presentation had demonstrated to the countries that they were working very closely with the Governments on gender-related issues and brought out the fact that they had succeeded in formulating so important an instrument as the Santiago Consensus. Since the seventh session of the Regional Conference, ECLAC had experienced a number of major changes, inasmuch as a new Executive Secretary had taken over the leadership of the

Commission at the start of the year. In addition, ECLAC had begun to implement its strategy for mainstreaming the gender perspective.

17. The Social Affairs Officer gave a detailed report on the work undertaken in order to implement the recommendations made by the Presiding Officers regarding the development, in collaboration with the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), of indicators on women's involvement in positions of power and leadership. Governmental and non-governmental organizations in 23 countries had already responded to the requests for information that had been sent out, and a preliminary evaluation of the data had been conducted. The Assistant Academic Director of FLACSO then referred to the other sources that had been used and their shortcomings.

18. Another important output of the activities conducted by the Women and Development Unit of ECLAC was the "Directory of national organizations dealing with programmes and policies on women in Latin America and the Caribbean". The Directory had been published in September 1997, and an updated version was to be completed by the next meeting of the Presiding Officers, scheduled for later in the year. The collaboration of all the countries of the region and, in particular, of the Presiding Officers was therefore requested, it being noted that the Presiding Officers could be of assistance in making the countries for which they provided liaison services aware of how important that process was.

19. In response to a request made by the Presiding Officers, a representative of the secretariat gave a presentation on the document, *The fiscal covenant. Strengths, weaknesses, challenges*.

20. The Presiding Officers then heard reports on the tasks carried out in connection with women's issues by the following ECLAC divisions and bodies: Division of Production, Productivity and Management, Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre - Population Division, Latin American and Caribbean Institute of Economic and Social Planning (ILPES), Social Development Division and Statistics and Economic Projections Division.

21. The officer-in-charge of the Women and Development Unit referred to the formulation of a strategy for mainstreaming the gender perspective in ECLAC activities, which had been prepared with the assistance of the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ). An exhaustive study had also been made of the Commission's programme of work in order to identify areas in which a gender-based form of analysis would be applicable. The results had been extremely positive, inasmuch as the conclusion had been reached that the scope for its application was much greater than had been foreseen, and the effort had led to the approval at the twenty-seventh session of ECLAC of a proposal for the creation of a new subprogramme that would provide the Unit with greater authority and resources.

22. The cross-disciplinary nature of the subject area had been demonstrated through the Unit's participation in a variety of activities. The activities which the officer-in-charge of the Unit mentioned in that regard included the provision of technical assistance to the Latin American Energy Organization (OLADE) in connection with its efforts to mainstream the gender

perspective; a study on the links between macroeconomics and gender inequality based on efficiency criteria; and collaboration with all the various divisions of ECLAC with a view to ensuring that prior to every project an assessment would be made of women's inputs and the project's effects on men and women.

Review of the follow-up to the Regional Programme of Action, in particular in strategic areas not considered at the seventh session of the Regional Conference (agenda item 5)

23. The participants were unanimous in acknowledging the importance of continuing the work of identifying indicators that would facilitate an evaluation of how fully the Regional Programme of Action and the Platform for Action were being implemented.

24. The Presiding Officers decided to redistribute the duties of the member States they represented with regard to the establishment of contact with the other countries of the region for coordination and information purposes (see section E).

Activities of the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session, particularly follow-up to the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women (agenda item 6)

25. The representative of Mexico, which was one of the countries of the region that had been represented at the forty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held in March 1998, reported that the debate during that session had focused on four main issues: violence against women, women and armed conflicts, women's human rights, and the girl child. She then distributed copies of the resolutions adopted on each of those subjects, which contained provisions relating to the regional commissions. She also told the participants that the Commission was serving as the preparatory committee for the session to be held on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women.

26. The representatives of programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations and of other intergovernmental bodies then outlined the activities conducted by institutions working in their respective fields concerning the issues of women and gender.²

27. At the closing meeting, the Secretary of the Commission discussed how valuable the work of the Presiding Officers was and noted that they occupied an important place in ECLAC forums because they set such a good example in terms of their interaction with the Governments of the member countries. In fact, the ad hoc working group established pursuant to resolution 553(XXVI) of ECLAC, whose purpose was to define priorities for the programme of work and recommend to the Commission strategic directions for its future activities, had to some extent been modeled upon the Presiding Officers.

² United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Children's Fund, International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Inter-American Commission on Women of the Organization of American States, and Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences.

28. The Secretary of the Commission also discussed how important it was to have created an awareness of the cross-disciplinary nature of gender issues, which was being reflected with increasing clarity in the activities of the various divisions. In addition, he made particular reference to the participation of the Chairperson of the Presiding Officers at the most recent session of ECLAC, citing it as an outstanding example of how influential that mechanism was in other areas of the institution's work.

E. AGREEMENTS REACHED

29. The representatives participating in the twenty-sixth meeting of the Presiding Officers arrived at the following agreements:

- (a) To have the Chairperson of the Presiding Officers report to the Commission at its sessions on the main outcomes of deliberations at forthcoming regional conferences, following the example set by the presentation concerning the Santiago Consensus made at the twenty-seventh session of ECLAC.
- (b) To identify important international forums appropriate for follow-up to the agreements adopted at conferences and summit meetings organized by the United Nations and to gather information in that connection.
- (c) To seek out more effective channels of communication among the countries of the region, the Presiding Officers, ECLAC and the permanent missions at United Nations Headquarters in New York, and to strengthen existing links.
- (d) To select the issues to be considered at the eighth session of the Regional Conference.
- (e) To continue to use the system of work used to prepare for the seventh session of the Regional Conference whereby different countries would be assigned responsibility for preparing the presentations to be given on the various subjects.
- (f) To continue to use the methods of organizing the work of the Regional Conference that were employed at its seventh session in order to facilitate a dialogue among the countries and between them and the institutions of civil society.
- (g) To convey information to the ECLAC secretariat concerning the development of indicators in the countries which would facilitate the compilation of data on the status of women in various spheres and an evaluation of how fully the Regional Programme of Action and the Platform for Action were being implemented.
- (h) To prepare an evaluation of how fully the Regional Programme of Action and the Platform for Action were being implemented in the countries and to request that the

ECLAC secretariat draw up a proposal for the development of appropriate methods for that purpose.

- (i) To strengthen links between the States members represented by the Presiding Officers and the countries for which they were to serve as liaison. To that end, the duties of those States were redefined.³
- (j) To hold the twenty-seventh meeting of the Presiding Officers in El Salvador, if possible immediately following the meeting of the Inter-American Commission of Women in late November or early December 1998, and to conduct the necessary consultations to that end.
- (k) To acknowledge that, if necessary, the subregions might hold meetings for the purpose of intensifying the preparatory activities being conducted with a view to the evaluation of the Platform for Action to be undertaken in the year 2000.
- (l) To hold the second of the meetings of the Presiding Officers scheduled for 1999, which was supposed to take place away from headquarters, in an English-speaking country of the Caribbean, and to conduct the necessary consultations to that end.
- (m) The Presiding Officers took note of the invitation extended by Peru to hold the eighth session of the Regional Conference in that country in the year 2000.

The delegates also expressed their concern at the fact that the ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean was not represented at the meeting.

³ Liaison duties were assigned as follows: Netherlands Antilles and Barbados: English-speaking Caribbean countries, Aruba and Suriname; Argentina: Colombia; Chile: Peru and Haiti; Cuba: Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic and assistance to Netherlands Antilles and Barbados; El Salvador: Guatemala and Honduras; Mexico: Costa Rica and Panama; Paraguay: Ecuador; and Venezuela: Uruguay. At this stage no countries were assigned to Bolivia or Brazil, but the Presiding Officers did not rule out the possibility of having them perform liaison functions for States not represented by the Presiding Officers in specific cases, as needed.

Annex

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

States members and associate members of the Commission

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BOLIVIA

Elizabeth Iñiguez de Salinas, Directora de Reformas Legales, Dirección General de Asuntos de Género, Ministerio de Desarrollo Humano

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Belkys Mones, Advisor on Gender, Population and Development

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Silvia Broder, Senior Programme Officer

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Mario Ferrari, Representative for Chile, Argentina and Uruguay

Soledad Larraín, Consultant on Gender

International Labour Organization (ILO)

Lieve Daerer, Expert on Gender Issues

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Vilma Aray, Senior Officer, Women in Development for Latin America and the Caribbean

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

María Luisa Jáuregui, Regional Specialist in Women's Education

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Mercedes Kremenetzky, Specialist

Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO)

Teresa Valdés, Assistant Academic Director, FLACSO/Chile

ECLAC secretariat

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