



SIXTY YEARS WITH LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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Forty-second meeting of the Presiding Officers
of the Regional Conference on Women
in Latin America and the Caribbean

Santiago, 4 and 5 December 2008

**PROPOSALS OF THE ECLAC SECRETARIAT FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE
ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN
IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

Brasilia, June 2010

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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 basis 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. The eleventh session of the Regional Conference is being organized within the framework of the international review process of the commitments assumed at the Fourth World Conference on Women, the International Conference on Population and Development and the Millennium Summit.

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 Women in Latin America and the Caribbean
- Regional Council for Planning
- Statistical Conference of the Americas

To date, the member States of ECLAC¹ have held 10 sessions of the Regional Conference on the integration of women into the economic and social development of Latin America and the Caribbean. The locations and dates of these sessions have been the following: Havana (1977); Macuto, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (1979); Mexico City (1983); Guatemala City (1988); Curaçao, Netherlands Antilles (1991); Mar del Plata, Argentina (1994); Santiago (1997); Lima (2000); Mexico City (2004); and Quito (2007).

2. Who convenes the sessions of the Regional Conference?

ECLAC has been given the mandate to convene the member States to sessions of the Regional Conference.² This mandate was ratified in 1996 by United Nations Economic and Social Council

¹ The member States of ECLAC are: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Germany, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Spain, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States and Uruguay. The following territories are associate members of ECLAC: Anguilla, Aruba, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, Puerto Rico, Turks and Caicos Islands 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 (ECLAC, 1977), 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 (ECLAC/United Nations Development Fund for

resolution 1996/6 entitled “Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women”, which “Recommends that the regional follow-up and monitoring of the regional platforms and programmes of action should be utilized as inputs for the review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action;” and “Recommends also that the Council consider how best to integrate the inputs of regional commissions into the overall monitoring and follow-up to the Platform for Action”.³

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 States and associate members of the Commission to participate in the deliberations. Other Member States 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 nongovernmental organizations enjoying consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, and special guests.

3. Where are the sessions of the Regional Conference held?

Generally, a member country of ECLAC offers to host the sessions of the Regional Conference. On this occasion, the Government of Brazil will host the meeting, which has tentatively been scheduled for the second half of May or the first half of June 2010 in Brasilia.

4. The aims of the eleventh session of the Regional Conference: a provisional proposal

The eleventh session of the Regional Conference will be devoted to the examination of the main results obtained in the region in the implementation of the commitments agreed to at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing (1995) and the sessions of the Regional Conference. Special attention will be paid to answering the following key questions regarding gender equality. For each question, the progress made so far will be determined, and structural barriers to development in the region’s countries will be examined.

- How should public policies for gender equality be formulated within the region’s current growth and development models?
- What challenges do economic growth and the spread of democracy witnessed in recent years pose to gender policies?
- What kind of development and democracy would be needed in order to achieve equality between men and women?
- Which parameters need to be set, in which areas, to ensure that public policies promote gender equality?

Women, 1995), which was approved by the member States at the sixth session of the Regional Conference and adopted by ECLAC resolution 558(XXVI) of ECLAC.

³ See (online) <http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/S/ECOSOC/resolutions/E-RES-1996-6.doc>.

5. Participants in the sessions of the Regional Conference

The sessions of the Regional Conference are attended by the member States and associate members of the Commission, as well as by observers with consultative status.⁴

In addition, the sessions are attended by observers from United Nations programmes and bodies,⁵ specialized agencies and other autonomous organizations within the system,⁶ intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations holding category I or category II consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.⁷ 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. The Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference

The Regional Conference elects its presiding officers at the beginning of each session. The heads of delegation are invited to a meeting which is held prior to the opening of the regular session for this purpose. The presiding officers generally 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.⁸

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. 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 and 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 a year for the past decade and have held 41 such meetings since 1978.

⁴ States Members of the United Nations which do not belong to the Commission and States which are not members of the United Nations hold consultative status and attend the sessions as observers.

⁵ 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).

⁶ These institutions include the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), International Fund 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).

⁷ 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 the Latin American Parliament.

⁸ Article 16 of the Rules of Procedure of the Commission.

⁹ See ECLAC, Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development (E/CEPAL/1042/Rev.1), Santiago, Chile, 1997, article 88, paragraph 2.

7. Proposed themes for the eleventh session of the Regional Conference

Given that the eleventh session of the Regional Conference in 2010 coincides with the fifteenth anniversary of both the Fourth World Conference on Women and the International Conference on Population and Development, the tenth anniversary of the Millennium Summit and the second anniversary of the Secretary-General's worldwide campaign to eliminate violence against women, it is proposed that the agendas associated with those commitments be combined in a process that encompasses global, regional and subregional activities.

The eleventh session of the Regional Conference will be preceded by the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in March 2010. Government authorities will meet at this CSW event to review the progress made with regard to the Fourth World Conference on Women, paying special attention to regional perspectives.

The framework of reference for this review process will consist of: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (New York, 2000), the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995),¹⁰ the international commitments relating to the advancement of women adopted by the world summits held in the 1990s,¹¹ and the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean adopted at the sixth Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (Mar del Plata, 1994) and ratified by the Lima Consensus (2000), the Mexico City Consensus (2004) and the Quito Consensus (2007).

In this context, the Presiding Officers, at their forty-second meeting, to be held in Santiago on 4 and 5 December 2008, may recommend that the discussions of the eleventh session be linked to the conclusions of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and be divided into sessions devoted to topics such as:¹²

- Equal access for men and women to economic autonomy, especially in the context of the financial crisis and its impact on gender equality and equity, including access to resources, employment, markets and trade, through the promotion and support of own-account work by women, land ownership, the creation of small enterprises, the improvement of access to credit and capital under conditions that are equal to those established for men and increased participation in economic decisions.¹³
- The impact of the food crisis on women's work, especially in rural areas, and strategies for reducing inequality.

¹⁰ See Beijing Platform for Action, 1995.

¹¹ World Summit for Children (New York, 1990); United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992); World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993); International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994); World Summit on Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995).

¹² Preliminary proposals compiled by the Secretariat for analysis.

¹³ Beijing Platform for Action, paragraph 166 (a).

- Official development assistance (ODA) as a crucial mechanism for empowering women, considering that ODA funds mainly target social sectors (especially health and education) and have more limited resources for empowering women in areas such as agriculture, infrastructure and finance.
- The cultural obstacles to achieving gender equality.

8. Preparation of the position paper for the Regional Conference

The position paper for the Regional Conference is prepared by the secretariat of ECLAC on the basis of the following input:

- The regional report drawn up on the basis of the responses to the questionnaire that the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations, through ECLAC, will send to Governments. This report will highlight the main achievements and challenges in this area and be submitted for the consideration of the Governments within the framework of the meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women that is to be held in March 2010 in New York. This report will provide the main input for the analysis of the regional situation that is to be performed at the eleventh session of the Regional Conference.
- The preliminary findings of the Gender Equality Observatory of Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Specialized studies performed by ECLAC and other United Nations bodies and academic entities in the region.
- The summary reports of two virtual forums that are to be held in the region in April 2009, one in Spanish for the countries of Latin America, and the other in English for the countries of the Caribbean.

9. Organization of the eleventh session of the Regional Conference: preliminary proposal

The eleventh session of the Regional Conference is to be the culmination of a process. The Commission on the Status of Women will identify the region's most important achievements and challenges at its fifty-fourth session in March 2010. Three months later, at the eleventh session of the Regional Conference, the region's Governments will focus on the formulation of policies and strategies that can be implemented in a changing global context.

Usually, the Regional Conference's four-day programme consists of: one day for a plenary meeting (including the opening ceremony and the election of the Presiding Officers); two days for the presentation of reports; and one day for the drafting and adoption of the agreements reached by consensus.

The secretariat proposes that the programme for the first day of the eleventh session of the Regional Conference consist of a single plenary meeting including an opening ceremony, attended by the President of Brazil, which would have a high political profile and full media coverage, and a high-level

panel, which might include past and present women presidents, prime ministers and governors general in the region, such as: Cristina Kirchner (Argentina), Lidia Gueiler Tejada (Bolivia), Michelle Bachelet (Chile), Janet Jagan (Guyana), Michèle Duvivier Pierre-Louis (Haiti), Portia Simpson-Miller (Jamaica), Violeta Barrios de Chamorro (Nicaragua), Mireya Moscoso Rodríguez (Panama) and Calliopa Pearlette Louisy (Saint Lucia). This panel could consider the conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women and propose specific measures for the region to implement in the short, medium and long term. The idea would be to convey the message that one of the major changes witnessed in the last few decades has been the increasing number of women in positions of power.

The election of the new Presiding Officers would take place on the first day as well.

The reports on the activities carried out by the secretariat and Governments, which are normally presented at the session of the Regional Conference, could be submitted earlier, possibly through virtual media, to provide more time for the analysis of proposals during the session itself. The complete versions of the reports would then be made available to the public on the website of the Regional Conference.

If this proposal is adopted, the presentation of the regional analysis (the position paper) on the first day could be combined with a second high-level panel consisting of politicians and academic experts in the thematic area chosen for the session.

If an economic theme is chosen for the session, ministers of finance and the economy and representatives of the corporate and financial sectors would be invited to participate. If a cultural theme is chosen, experts in intercultural relations, multiculturalism, patriarchal systems and gender equality in various fields, such as semiotics, sociology, art, culture and anthropology, would be invited.

On the second and third day of the session, the participants in the Conference could then be divided into two groups to analyse in detail the theme or themes selected at the forty-second meeting of Presiding Officers, and representatives of sectors involved in applying concrete social and political policies and practices would be invited to participate in the meetings arranged for these days.

On the fourth day, the final agreements would be analysed and adopted at a plenary meeting in accordance with the Conference's strategic guidelines, in other words, emphasis would be placed on proposals that complement or supplement those adopted three months earlier by the Commission on the Status of Women and that respond to regional realities. These agreements would form the basis for the Brasilia Consensus, which would be presented for approval at the closing ceremony.

10. Participation of civil society

Non-governmental organizations may participate in the Regional Conference as follows:

- By organizing an independent meeting prior or parallel to the session of the Regional Conference and preparing a statement or proposals for presentation during the session.
- As part of national delegations. This must be organized at the country level and be approved by the respective Governments.
- As organizations with consultative status in the United Nations, in accordance with the norms of the Economic and Social Council.

- As observers specially invited by ECLAC in the case of regional or subregional networks that are recognized for their work in implementing the Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean and the Beijing Platform for Action.

11. Side events

Side events are carried out by bodies of the United Nations with other entities that specialize in the topics related to the Conference and in coordination with the secretariat.

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