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**REPORT OF THE FIFTH MEETING OF SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER
BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ON FUTURE ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE
THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN INTO LATIN AMERICAN AND
CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT**

(Santiago, Chile, 18 and 21 November 1997)

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Mandate

1. The fifth Meeting of Specialized Agencies and Other Bodies of the United Nations System on Future Activities to Promote the Integration of Women into Latin American and Caribbean Development was convened by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) pursuant to the Regional Plan of Action adopted at the first session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Havana, Cuba, in 1977. The Regional Plan of Action states that the secretariat of ECLAC "will consult with the United Nations specialized agencies which have programmes on women's integration in development".

Place and date

2. In fulfilment of the aforementioned mandate, the fifth Meeting of Specialized Agencies and Other Bodies of the United Nations System on Future Activities to Promote the Integration of Women into Latin American and Caribbean Development was held in Santiago, Chile, on 18 and 21 November 1997.

Attendance

3. The following specialized agencies, bodies and programmes of the United Nations system were represented at the meeting: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Pan American Health Organization-World Health Organization (PAHO-WHO) and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The meeting was also attended by representatives of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), and Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO).

B. SUMMARY OF THE DEBATES

4. The Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) said that the purpose of the meeting was to permit an exchange of information within the framework of the Regional Conference. The participants should also take advantage of the opportunity to analyse shared problems whose effects extended beyond the bounds of the meeting itself.

5. Before opening the debate, the Chief of the ECLAC Women and Development Unit noted that the forthcoming session of the Regional Conference would be run somewhat differently than in the past because the countries had taken responsibility for the substantive analysis of the two main topics to be considered, namely, access to power and decision-making, and sustainable development, poverty and gender. Presentations would be made by Argentina and Mexico on the first topic and by Cuba and Honduras on the second. Representatives of the other participating countries would then formulate their responses in an effort to find means of implementing relevant measures that would build upon the progress already made.

6. The documents distributed to the participants included an unofficial text sponsored by the Government of Chile which set forth a number of policy proposals regarding the two topics, and the Georgetown Consensus, which was a position paper issued by the Caribbean subregion. The secretariat had also prepared two position papers and a number of background documents on such subjects as the progress made in implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; gender, the environment and sustainable development; education; and spousal violence. Documents prepared by the agencies included a report by UNFPA on poverty and gender equity. The participants then commented upon the documentation prepared by various agencies. The representative of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) informed the participants that her agency had prepared one document on the feminization of power and another on gender and democracy.

7. The representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said that the Programme was conducting studies in 15 different countries of the region on the macroeconomy, poverty and equity. The research effort was being coordinated by ECLAC and was being implemented within the framework of a gender perspective.

8. The representative of the International Labour Organization (ILO) said that ILO had prepared a document in which it presented a baseline analysis of the employment situation and formulated the Organization's response to that situation. Materials on poverty, gender and employment were also being produced. In addition, ILO was organizing a tripartite meeting to provide representatives of Argentina, Chile and Uruguay with an opportunity to examine the subject of women's access to economic decision-making and was designing a project to be entitled "More and better jobs for women".

9. The Chief of the ECLAC Women and Development Unit said that the institution's strategy called for the incorporation of the gender perspective in all areas of the programme of work, and support for that effort had been forthcoming from the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ). The results had been encouraging, since the professional staff members who had been interviewed were quite open to the idea because they realized that the application of such a perspective would add a broader dimension to their work. The shortage of resources available for the project on indicators that was being undertaken with FLACSO was highly unfortunate, but information requests had been sent out to a number of organizations in the countries so that a basic listing could be compiled.

10. In response to a comment regarding the difficulties in terms of the dissemination of information that were caused by the rotation of participants in the meetings, the representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) mentioned a variety of activities being carried out by UNESCO and suggested that meetings should be held more frequently in order to provide improved follow-up. The ILO representative said that it would be feasible to hold small-scale meetings for the purpose of information exchange which could serve as an ongoing mechanism for the establishment of inter-agency contacts and the optimization of the scant amount of resources available.

The UNIFEM representative, on the other hand, felt that it would be easier to collaborate in the implementation of concrete initiatives.

11. The representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) endorsed the suggestion made by the representative of UNIFEM and mentioned a recent initiative aimed at upholding the rights of adolescents and preventing teenage pregnancy. Efforts to mainstream the gender perspective in the Fund's programme of work had not met with any appreciable degree of opposition, but it was nonetheless important to determine exactly how to proceed. The representative also referred to a publication concerning provisions of the countries' penal codes relating to women and stated that changes had already been made in some countries' laws. She underscored the importance of statistics and discussed the procedures being used within CARICOM in order to incorporate the gender perspective into the census round for the year 2000.

12. The representative of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) spoke about information-related issues and referred, in particular, to the serious situation existing in the region in that field, since many publications had fallen far behind schedule and the lack of statistics made indicators difficult to construct. After citing various examples of how the absence of accurate, timely data on the day-to-day situation of different groups of women impaired the formulation of public policies for development, she emphasized the fundamental, strategic importance of censuses in terms of development and requested the Economic Commission's assistance in making that situation known to its member States.

13. The representative of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) explained that, after a number of years, the Institute was re-examining the subject of gender. In reference to the inter-agency coordination mechanism whose establishment had been proposed at the meeting, he mentioned a project on women and rural microenterprise as an example of the types of initiatives that lent themselves to collaborative efforts on the part of all the agencies.

14. When the meeting was reconvened on 21 November 1997, a consultant attached to the Women and Development Unit provided a detailed rundown of the activities being conducted with a view to the institutionalization of the gender perspective as a mainstream element in the substantive work of ECLAC. She mentioned a number of pilot projects being executed by the Commission that would provide inputs for the design of relevant strategies in the coming years and referred to the forthcoming session of ECLAC, at which the programme of work for 2000-2001 would be approved; an attempt would be made at the session to mainstream the gender perspective in the regular programme of work and in projects funded by extrabudgetary resources.

15. The representative of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) reported that the Bank had made headway in mainstreaming the gender perspective; most of the progress in that regard had been achieved by the committee that dealt with environmental and social impacts. The priority areas for that committee, which examined all IDB projects at the start of their design stage, were social sectors, State reform, participation of the citizenry, urban projects, environmental programmes and relocation of human settlements. The Women in Development Programme Unit had a gender specialist in the three areas of the region where the Bank worked: the Southern Cone, Central America and the Andean region, and the English-speaking Caribbean. The Bank was also conducting gender-related technical cooperation projects in such areas as job training, childcare and child development, and domestic violence. Work on the definition of a strategy for addressing reproductive health issues would begin in 1998.

16. The representative of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) said that PAHO was in the process of designing projects in collaboration with public health ministries in the region as well as training seminars at the community level. The projects focused on domestic violence, reproductive health and indigenous women, and the incorporation of local experiences into government plans. The representative underlined the importance of constructing indicators that would facilitate diagnostic and oversight tasks.

17. In commenting upon the question of indicators, the representative of FLACSO referred to the project in that area formulated by ECLAC and discussed the lamentable lack of resources for that initiative. A great deal of widely dispersed knowledge and information existed which could be useful to academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and research centres; household surveys were not representative of the actual situation because data were collected only for urban areas and in a limited number of countries.

18. The representative of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) reviewed the most important activities carried out by UNIDO since 1994 and gave a detailed description of two projects in Colombia and Bolivia involving the implementation of a comprehensive plan for reducing the barriers to women's participation in industrial development. Projects were being developed along much the same lines for Argentina, Brazil and Chile, and Paraguay and Uruguay had expressed interest in similar initiatives.

19. Turning back to the issue of coordination, some representatives felt that the inter-agency meetings should have a more definite structure and that forthcoming meetings should be announced well in advance. The Chief of the Women and Development Unit explained that an attempt to do so had been made in the past but had not been successful. It was then proposed that an ongoing coordination mechanism should be set up in Santiago and that invitations should be sent directly to the delegates rather than being channeled through the executive offices of the various agencies.