

UNITED NATIONS

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION
FOR LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN - ECLAC**



Distr.
LIMITED
LC/L.1236
10 August 1999
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

**REPORT OF THE SEVENTH 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**

(Curaçao, Netherlands Antilles, 2 June 1999)

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Mandate

1. The seventh 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 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.

Place and date

2. In fulfilment of the abovementioned mandates, the seventh 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 Curaçao, Netherlands Antilles, on 2 June 1999.

3. The following programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations were represented at the meeting: United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), World Food Programme, Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Inter-American Commission of Women of the Organization of American States (IACW/OAS), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

B. AGENDA

4. The participants in the seventh meeting adopted the following agenda:

1. Activities carried out or planned within the framework of the United Nations system in relation to women in Latin America and the Caribbean since the seventh session of the Regional Conference
2. Preparations for the eighth session of the Regional Conference, to be held in Lima during the first half of the year 2000, relating to the areas proposed by the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean at their twenty-seventh meeting

3. Preparations for the special session of the General Assembly to appraise and assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the Beijing Platform for Action, to be held in June 2000
4. Priority tasks in the area of inter-agency regional coordination
5. Other matters

C. SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Activities carried out or planned within the framework of the United Nations system in relation to women in Latin America and the Caribbean since the seventh session of the Regional Conference (agenda item 1)

5. The Officer-in-Charge of the Women and Development Unit of ECLAC reported on the inter-agency meeting on further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations, held at ECLAC headquarters on 6 May 1999. The meeting was chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and attended by representatives of 23 agencies with operations in Latin America and the Caribbean, and resulted in the identification of priority areas which offered potential for strengthening mutual cooperation in the implementation of activities at the regional level.
6. It was pointed out that inter-agency meetings associated with the meetings of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference served as a model for similar gatherings, and were a valuable example of cooperation. Another important aspect of the current meeting was the recognition that gender equity was a crucial issue, and one which, by its very nature, lent itself to inter-agency coordination. The choice of gender equity as the theme for the eighth session of the Regional Conference was evidence of the fact that the topic was closely related to the work being carried out within the system as a whole.
7. The representative of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture said that the invitation to the meeting had prompted an evaluation of the degree of fulfilment by her organization of the agreements listed in the Regional Programme of Action and the Platform for Action. The Institute was making a significant effort to break the general pattern of exclusion suffered by rural areas in terms of development and to foster an approach which would underscore the contribution of rural areas to territorial and regional development together with the positive transfers from rural to urban areas. This new perception of the rural sector was closely linked to the advances made in gender studies and to the theory of feminization of agriculture, which was gaining credence; indeed, it had an influence on patterns of investment in the agricultural sector and a significant impact on technology, on the selection of human resources and on the institutional incentives offered by IICA. In conclusion, she referred to the inter-agency work being carried out with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), ECLAC and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). There were two specific issues relating to rural development in regard to which further information and technical support were needed: the cost of natural disasters in terms of the burden of work on women and the serious security problems arising in rural areas of Central America as a result of armed conflict.
8. The CARICOM representative said that the Community was implementing the Plan of Action it had adopted in 1996 as the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women; it placed special

emphasis on activities that could contribute to gender equity. Violence against women remained a pressing issue notwithstanding the legislation enacted in most countries of the region to address it. Major efforts were being pursued to eradicate it.

9. The Women's Affairs Unit of CARICOM had collaborated with UNIFEM on the organization of regional workshops on the preparation of reports requested by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women on application of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. CARICOM also planned to contribute to the update of information envisaged by countries of the region as part of their preparations for the special session of the General Assembly entitled: "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".

10. The UNICEF representative, who was also attending the meeting on behalf of UNIFEM, reported that in recent years, UNICEF had concentrated on strengthening its work in the area of human rights, and specifically on the development of the relevant legislative framework in countries of the region. It had also worked intensively to integrate into such legislation the standards embodied in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (or "Convention of Belém do Pará"). That work covered every stage of a woman's life, although the UNICEF mandate concerned only the period from birth to 18 years of age, and reflected the organization's interest in applying a comprehensive approach to the human rights of women.

11. The representative of the World Food Programme reported on the activities being carried out by her organization to improve the status of women, particularly the appraisal and assessment of gender mainstreaming in all programmes. To that end, the office responsible for gender issues had been strengthened, and the data-collection capacity of staff had been reinforced.

12. The representative of the Inter-American Commission on Women of the Organization of American States reported on the outcome of the most recent OAS General Assembly, at which several resolutions proposed by the Inter-American Commission had been adopted. One of those resolutions urged the Secretary-General of that organization to seek to ensure that, by the year 2005, 50% of the posts in all categories within the OAS system, particularly the higher-level categories, would be held by women. The plans of the Inter-American Commission for the immediate future included the preparation of an analysis of the progress made during the five years since the adoption of the Convention of Belém do Pará and activities in follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and the second Summit of the Americas.

13. The Officer-in-Charge of the Women and Development Unit of ECLAC reported that in the preceding months, the Unit had focused on two processes. The first concerned mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the substantive work of the organization, which consisted in promoting the adoption and application of the gender dimension in the projects of all divisions in order to achieve, in a second stage, a multiplier effect through cooperation for development provided by ECLAC to its member countries. The second process was the development of indicators in response to the mandate received from the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference. Those indicators had been included in a detailed publication on the issue with a view to assisting countries in their presentation of reports on fulfilment of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Regional Programme of Action and the agreements adopted at the second Summit of the Americas. She therefore asked participants to send in their comments, since the proposed indicators, which were strictly quantitative in nature, were conceived by ECLAC as a first phase in the compilation of more refined and sophisticated information, leading to the development of

qualitative indicators designed to assess the actual contribution of national policies to the advancement of women.

14. In general, all the participating organizations agreed that valuable ties of cooperation had been established, as evidenced by the varied activities in areas of interest to two or more agencies. A number of inter-agency groups had also adopted a cross-cutting approach with highly positive results. The presentations by participants had also revealed a clear trend towards inter-agency integration which had led them to join forces on current issues that were of special interest, including human rights, violence against women, empowerment and decision-making.

15. Delegations had also drawn attention to the trend towards gender mainstreaming, a process reflected in various activities undertaken by the agencies, both at the analytical level and in the execution of specific tasks such as staff training and, increasingly, project development. Moreover, specifically in the case of ECLAC, the spectrum of issues under consideration had expanded to include subjects such as that of macroeconomics and gender.

Preparations for the eighth session of the Regional Conference, to be held in Lima during the first half of the year 2000, relating to the areas proposed by the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean at their twenty-seventh meeting, and Preparations for the special session of the General Assembly to appraise and assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the Beijing Platform for Action, to be held in June 2000 (agenda items 2 and 3)

16. The Officer-in-Charge of the Women and Development Unit of ECLAC recalled that the eighth session of the Regional Conference would be the regional forum preparatory to the special session of the General Assembly (also referred to informally as "Beijing +5"), and announced that the Commission was preparing some substantive background papers on the basis of consultations with countries. The preparatory process provided great opportunities for coordination with Governments and related organizations.

17. The representative of the ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean reported on the organization of three technical meetings (two of which had already been held) to consider, in conjunction with the countries and non-self-governing territories of the region, the measures adopted pursuant to the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and to draft the relevant reports requested by the Commission on the Status of Women. At one of the meetings, the indicators developed by ECLAC had been used with very satisfactory results. Governments were thus able to have a clear idea of the information they should request from statistical offices.

18. Within the next few months, a meeting would be held at the ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean to examine the consolidated regional reports to be prepared on the basis of the national reports.

19. The UNICEF representative said that her organization was planning a regional meeting, to be held in November 1999, to report on preparations being made throughout Latin America and the Caribbean for the eighth session of the Regional Conference and the special session of the General Assembly ("Beijing +5"), a task which would be facilitated by the existing network of focal points.

20. She also reported that the office of the United Nations Development Fund for Women in Mexico had indicated its willingness to collaborate with the ECLAC subregional headquarters in Mexico on specific preparatory activities, and that the World Food Programme had set up an office of an adviser on gender issues in Lima. That office, together with the one in Nicaragua, would be the appropriate units for handling any preparations deemed appropriate. The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture was also planning to hold an inter-regional meeting in October, at which a resolution on gender mainstreaming would be adopted.

21. The Officer-in-Charge of the Women and Development Unit reminded participants that the Unit needed to receive information on the studies and projects undertaken by all the agencies within the system, in order to ensure that the position papers presented at the eighth session of the Regional Conference would provide a comprehensive picture of the situation of women, reflecting the widest possible range of variables. Such information would also enable it to assess the progress achieved in the past five years and the extent to which the new approaches and perspectives had been implemented.

Priority tasks in the area of inter-agency regional coordination (agenda item 4)

22. The organizations represented at the meeting undertook to keep their communication channels open in the period leading up to the eighth session of the Regional Conference and the special session of the General Assembly, and to contribute specific inputs to the areas selected for analysis. They also agreed to provide support to Governments in different areas of the preparatory activities.

D. AGREEMENTS REACHED

23. The participants at the meeting reached the following agreements:

1. To disseminate information on the meetings of specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system among the entities concerned, for purposes of continuity and coordination;
2. To report on these meetings to other special inter-agency committees and forums, and to include the report of the current and future meetings on the agenda of the inter-agency committees operating in the region;
3. To amend the title of this forum to "Meeting of Specialized Agencies and Other Bodies of the United Nations System on the Advancement of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean";
4. To take note of the undertaking by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture to present to the eighth session of the Regional Conference a study on new rural trends and gender;
5. To take note of the undertaking by UNICEF to prepare a document as its contribution to the eighth session of the Regional Conference;

6. To send to ECLAC, as soon as possible, information on their priority issues and conceptual frameworks as a substantive contribution to the preparations for the eighth session of the Regional Conference.

Annex

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and
United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

Gladys Acosta Vargas, Regional advisor on women and gender equity

World Food Programme (WFP)

Guillermina Segura de Usera, Representative

Intergovernmental organizations

Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

Gemma Tang Nain, Deputy Programme Manager

Inter-American Commission of Women of the Organization of American States (IACW/OAS)

Mercedes Kremenetzky, Senior specialist

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)

Clarita Solís-Araya, Director for Sustainable Rural Development and Advisor to the
Director-General

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