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**REPORT OF THE TWENTY-THIRD 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**

(Port of Spain, 18-19 November 1996)

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Mandate and objective

1. In accordance with section 2 of paragraph 88 of the Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development, approved in 1977 at the eleventh special session of the Committee of the Whole of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), it is the duty 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 to serve as the link between Governments and the secretariat of ECLAC in the field of women's integration into development.
2. Furthermore, the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean adopted by the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean at its sixth session (Mar del Plata, Argentina, 25-29 September 1994) requests that "... the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean assume responsibility for following up the implementation of the Programme of Action in collaboration with Governments, and with the participation of national bodies responsible for policies and programmes for women as well as of the subregional groupings" (chapter E, paragraph b).

Place and date of the meeting

3. The Presiding Officers, who were elected at the sixth session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, held their twenty-third meeting on 18 and 19 November 1996 at Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

Attendance

4. The meeting was attended by participants from the following countries represented by the Presiding Officers: Argentina, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles and Uruguay. Representatives of the following United Nations bodies were also in attendance: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The following specialized agencies of the United Nations were also represented: 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 (IACW/OAS), the University of the West Indies and the network of non-governmental organizations for the advancement of women in Trinidad and Tobago.

Chairperson and Rapporteur

5. The meeting was chaired by Ambassador Zelmira Regazzoli, 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.

Agenda

6. The Presiding Officers adopted the following agenda for their twenty-third meeting:
1. Adoption of the agenda.
 2. Review of the activities of the Presiding Officers and the ECLAC secretariat since the twenty-second meeting of the Presiding Officers held on 16-17 May 1996.
 3. Preparations for the seventh session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, to be held in Santiago, Chile, November 1997.
 4. Organization of the work of the Presiding Officers in follow-up to the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001.
 5. Other matters.

Documentation

7. The representatives had before them the following documents: Provisional agenda (LC/L.993(MDM.23/1)), Annotated provisional agenda (LC/L.994(MDM.23/2)), Report of the twenty-second 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 (Santiago, Chile, 16-17 May 1996) (LC/L.966(MDM.22/4)), Report of the meeting of the ad hoc working group established pursuant to resolution 553(XXVI) (LC/G.1942), Formación de los recursos humanos femeninos: prioridad del crecimiento y de la equidad, Mujer y desarrollo series, No. 15 (LC/L.947), Violencia de género: un problema de derechos humanos, Mujer y desarrollo series, No. 16 (LC/L.957), Mujer y política: complejidades y ambivalencia de una relación (LC/R.1643), Mujeres jóvenes de clase media: entre diálogos y contrapuntos (LC/R.1658) and notes regarding the modalities to be employed and subjects to be addressed at the seventh session of the Regional Conference.

B. SUMMARY OF THE DEBATES

8. The meeting was opened by the Director of the ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean, who welcomed the participants. The following speaker was the Minister for Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago, who said that her country had always taken part in ECLAC activities aimed at improving the status of women and that, although it was not represented among the Presiding Officers, it could identify with them. She spoke of her country's interest in improving the situation of female heads of household, its concern at the paucity of information reflecting a gender perspective, and the priority it accorded to dealing with the problem of domestic violence.

9. The Chairperson of the Presiding Officers drew attention to the challenge involved in giving greater impetus to the Regional Programme of Action that was adopted in 1994 and said that education was a key means of transforming women into active participants in the process of change. Paraphrasing Ortega y Gasset, she went on to say that the region had reached a turning-point in its history and was living through a period of upheaval and far-reaching change; it was therefore its duty to consider future generations, and especially women, who were the hub of society. This was the task which the Presiding Officers should set themselves in preparation for the next session of the Regional Conference.

Review of the activities of the Presiding Officers and the ECLAC secretariat since the twenty-second meeting of the Presiding Officers held on 16-17 May 1996 (agenda item 2)

10. The Chief of the ECLAC Women and Development Unit provided an overview of the activities of the Presiding Officers since their twenty-second meeting. She made special reference to the support given to activities for the integration of women at the meeting of the ad hoc working group that had been created at the most recent session of the Commission for the purpose of setting priorities for the programme of work and to the ECLAC-Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) cooperation project (subject area 5.5) on women and gender equity, which was seeking to systematize indicators of women's participation and of their performance of leadership functions in the region. She also mentioned the importance of mainstreaming women's issues in the preparation of the programmes and budgets of the Commission's sectoral divisions so that, whenever possible, the gender perspective could be taken into consideration this would facilitate the incorporation of a gender perspective into all the activities pursued under the programmes and projects executed in the countries.

11. The representatives examined the priorities that were emerging in the subregions. Particular attention was paid to the effect of migrations and to the situation of female-headed households, which made up more than 50% of households in some countries. The indicator project was also discussed, and requests were made for inclusion of a specific component on the Caribbean subregion and for some mention to be made of Chile's progress in that field. Representatives were informed that a Caribbean subregional conference was to be held in Guyana in August 1997 and heard reports on meetings held in Central America to analyse the situation of women and to examine projects that were in the pipeline within that subregion.

12. Representatives reported on activities undertaken in follow-up to the twenty-second meeting of the Presiding Officers, particularly in the field of information. Proposals for horizontal cooperation had been made and collaborative links had been set up between the Government and non-governmental

organizations in some countries. One participant suggested that the countries represented by the Presiding Officers should report to the ECLAC secretariat on any bilateral projects they might execute with other countries of the region. There was general agreement that the decision adopted at the preceding meeting of the Presiding Officers to assign each member responsibilities relating to the countries in its own geographical area had yielded very positive results.

13. The UNFPA representative reported on the Fund's activities, including programmes to aid victims of domestic violence in Ecuador and to compile and systematize reproductive health data, especially on young people.

14. The FAO representative drew attention to the fact that the gender perspective had been incorporated into the Plan of Action adopted at the World Food Summit in Rome in November 1996 and spoke of the gender training seminars held in Central America, and the programme developed by FAO in collaboration with the ILO International Training Centre.

15. The UNHCR representative mentioned priority issues for her organization: women and armed conflicts, violence against women, and women's human rights. A major task for UNHCR was to look into the community power structures of beneficiary groups.

16. The UNICEF representative outlined the activities conducted by her organization on behalf of women and children, notably the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the revision of social statistics with a view to ensuring that women, boys and girls were included in poverty relief programmes.

17. The representative of the University of the West Indies described the University's programmes, drawing particular attention to the incorporation of the gender perspective into the University's various schools, the consideration of gender issues in such areas as agriculture, science and technology, and the organization of a conference on gender and the environment.

Preparations for the seventh session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (agenda item 3)

18. The representatives considered the subjects to be addressed at the next session of the Regional Conference and the modalities to be employed, and agreed that the session should provide the impetus for speeding up the pace of the necessary policy changes and of the modifications required for a more precise identification of possible areas for cooperation.

19. It was decided that individual country reports would not be requested; instead, the countries would be provided with guidelines to facilitate debate on the substantive issues. In addition, an indication should be given of what obstacles needed to be overcome in dealing with those issues. It was important not to lose touch with the countries to which the subjects had been assigned and to discuss those issues at the subregional level.

20. It was agreed that two documents would be produced for the seventh session of the Regional Conference, on the topics of decision-making, and sustainable development and poverty.

21. In the discussion on decision-making, one of the selected substantive topics,¹ it was noted that the document to be produced should include a chapter on definitions and another containing a baseline analysis of the situation. The subject should be explored both within a family context and in terms of participation in the community and in politics. In addition to the legal aspects of the question, the study should look at social practices and customs, family structures and how they were changing, the education process, formal and informal socialization, education programmes and teacher training. Other issues mentioned included training in negotiating skills and the development of self-esteem, making family roles more flexible, money and power relations, and health and women's new responsibilities.

22. The debate on sustainable development and poverty² highlighted the need to examine follow-up activities to the summits held in recent years and assess the potential for incorporating the gender perspective. With regard to the baseline analysis, it was agreed that the focus should be on the obstacles to overcoming poverty and on the programmes to combat poverty that were being carried out in the region. The utmost importance was attached to employment, especially to such aspects as unemployment, exploitation, social security and appropriate training. Other topics that the document should not fail to address included basic social problems, poverty, environmental deterioration and more rational resource use. In relation to the Caribbean subregion, natural disasters and the effects on human health of waste disposal were other highly important topics.

23. The representative of IACW offered the Commission's assistance, particularly in areas in which it was working, such as the analysis of anti-violence and affirmative action legislation.

Organization of the work of the Presiding Officers in follow-up to the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean (agenda item 4)

24. The debate on this agenda item is reflected in the agreements set forth in section C.

Other matters (agenda item 5)

25. In response to the request made by the coordinator of Latin American and Caribbean Network of Government Offices for Women that the network be allowed to participate in the twenty-third meeting of the Presiding Officers, the Chairperson had sent a letter to the coordinator in which she emphasized the intergovernmental nature of the forum for follow-up to the Regional Programme of Action. She had thanked the coordinator for the Network's valuable assistance in establishing links among government offices and bodies dealing with women's issues and explained that the participants in the meetings were representatives of the countries elected to serve as Presiding Officers, although in specific circumstances other ECLAC member States, organizations of the United Nations system, intergovernmental agencies or non-governmental organizations could be invited to attend as observers, as the Presiding Officers saw fit.

¹ See section C.

² See section C.

C. AGREEMENTS

26. The Presiding Officers reached the following agreements:

With regard to the draft report of the project on indicators (ECLAC-FLACSO cooperation project) submitted by the ECLAC secretariat, the Presiding Officers agreed that data on the Caribbean should be included in the study and that the document on indicators submitted by Chile should be incorporated.

The Presiding Officers agreed to hold the seventh session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago, Chile, on 19-21 November 1997.

The aim of the session would be to provide impetus for speedier implementation of the activities provided for in the Regional Programme of Action.

The Presiding Officers selected two priority topics as a basis for the debates: decision-making, and sustainable development and poverty. These subjects, which the Commission on the Status of Women had also selected as priority topics, should be addressed on the basis of an integrated, cross-disciplinary approach.

Although both issues were of interest to all the countries, it was agreed that Argentina, Chile and Mexico should take responsibility for the first, while Cuba, Ecuador and Netherlands Antilles would deal with the second; Uruguay would define its priority area at a later date. The representatives would ensure that their countries were informed of that topic allocation. The corresponding documents would be prepared in collaboration with the secretariat.

As regards the organization of the session, it was agreed that plenary meetings would be held in the morning of the first day and in the afternoon of the third day. From the afternoon of 19 November through the morning of 21 November, two committees would sit, each of which would discuss one of the selected topics. Each committee would be chaired by a representative of one of the countries responsible for that topic.

The ECLAC secretariat would send preliminary outlines of the documents concerned ("Decision-making" and "Sustainable development and poverty") to the countries represented by the presiding Officers before 31 December 1996; those outlines would reflect the points agreed upon at the present meeting.

After consultation with their assigned countries, the countries represented by the Presiding Officers would submit their inputs for the documents to the secretariat before 30 January 1997. Information on the Caribbean subregion would be submitted via the ECLAC subregional headquarters in Port of Spain.

The secretariat would send the draft documents to the countries represented by the Presiding Officers by mid-April 1997. The drafts would be examined at the twenty-fourth meeting of the Presiding Officers, to be held the first week of May. Both documents would then be submitted by the secretariat and the Presiding Officers to the seventh session of the Regional Conference as joint position papers.

On the basis of the contributions received, the secretariat would provide the countries with preliminary guidelines for the introduction of the topics in the Conference committees. The topics should

be introduced by Presiding Officers, and the modalities to be employed for that purpose would be discussed in more detail at the next meeting of the Officers.

Also at the next meeting of the Presiding Officers, the secretariat would submit a provisional list of non-governmental organizations that might be invited to the seventh session of the Regional Conference.

The secretariat would request the specialized agencies of the United Nations to contribute to the analysis of topics falling within their purview.

The Presiding Officers would ask the Executive Secretary of ECLAC for contributions to the session from the substantive divisions of the Commission as part of their own programmes of work.

The Presiding Officers would propose that at its seventh session the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean should adopt a declaration or agreement on speeding up the pace of changes for the benefit of women.

Annex

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

States members and associate members of the Commission

ARGENTINA

Zelmira M. Regazzoli, Embajadora, Subsecretaria de Derechos Humanos; Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Comercio Internacional y Culto

CHILE

María Josefina Bilbao, Ministra, Directora Servicio Nacional de la Mujer
Teresa Rodríguez, Jefa del Departamento de Relaciones Internacionales y Cooperación, Servicio Nacional de la Mujer

CUBA

Yolanda Ferrer Gómez, Secretaria General de la Federación de Mujeres Cubanas
Magalys Arocha Domínguez, Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores de la Federación de Mujeres Cubanas

ECUADOR

Manuela Fernández-Madrid, Directora, Dirección Nacional de la Mujer

MEXICO

Aída González Martínez, Embajadora, Coordinadora de Asuntos de la Mujer, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores
Lic. Dulce María Sauri Riancho, Coordinadora del Programa Nacional de la Integración de la Mujer al Desarrollo

NETHERLANDS ANTILLES

Jamila Romero, Economist

URUGUAY

María Beatriz Etchechury Mazza, Asesora, Instituto Nacional de la Familia y de la Mujer

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The Honourable Dr. Daphne Phillips, Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs

United Nations bodies

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Maddalena Pezzotti, Associate Programme Officer (Women refugees), Guatemala

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

María José Alcalá, Programme Officer, Latin America and Caribbean Division, New York

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Elaine King, Deputy Project Officer, The Americas and Caribbean Regional Office

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Jan van Eyndhoven, Resident Representative

Tessa Jardine, Senior Programme Assistant

Specialized agencies

International Labour Organization (ILO)

James Williams, Director a.i. Caribbean Office and Health Multi-Disciplinary Team

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Savas Erozer, Senior Regional Officer, Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean

United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO)

Winthrop Wiltshire, Representative and Subregional Adviser on Science and Technology