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REPORT OF THE FOURTEENTH 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

(Curaçao, 18-19 June 1992)

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Mandate

1. In accordance with paragraph 88 (2) of the Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development, adopted at the eleventh special meeting of the Committee of the Whole of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), it is incumbent upon the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference to be the link between the governments and the secretariat of ECLAC in the field of women's integration into development.

Place and date

2. In compliance with this mandate, the Presiding Officers who had been elected at the fifth session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean held their fourteenth meeting on 18 and 19 June 1992 in Curaçao, Netherlands Antilles.

Attendance

3. The meeting was attended by participants from the following countries represented by Presiding Officers: Argentina, Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Venezuela. Representatives from the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the Inter-American Commission of Women of the Organization of American States (IACW/OAS) also attended the meeting. The meeting was chaired by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands Antilles, Ms. Maria Liberia Peters. The delegation of Argentina, headed by Ms. Zelmira Regazzoli, served as Rapporteur.

Agenda

4. The Presiding Officers adopted the following agenda for their fourteenth meeting:
1. Adoption of the agenda
 2. Report on activities from 1 June 1991 to 31 May 1992
 - Report of the Chairman of the Presiding Officers
 - Report of the Presiding Officers
 - Report on secretariat activities

3. Fifth session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean
 - Analysis of resolutions adopted
 - Evaluation of the fifth session
 - Work programme for the Presiding Officers
4. Group of experts for the preparation of a new regional plan of action on the integration of women into Latin American and Caribbean economic and social development
5. Fifteenth 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
6. Other matters.

B. SUMMARY OF DEBATES

5. The meeting was opened by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands Antilles, Ms. Maria Liberia Peters, who cordially welcomed the representatives of the participating countries and organizations.

6. After thanking the Government of the Netherlands Antilles for its hospitality and greeting the Presiding Officers and the participating organizations, the Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean said that any analysis of the status of women had to take into account the breathtaking changes that had occurred in the world, and that such analysis should take place within the framework of the regional proposal for changing production patterns with social equity adopted by the member countries of the Commission. The proposal's aim was to establish societies with more dynamic economies and greater social cohesiveness within a context of environmental sustainability and democracy. It would be unthinkable to undertake the enormous efforts called for by the proposal without the full participation of women.

7. He then referred to the importance of the tasks to be undertaken at the present meeting, leading to the preparation of a new regional plan of action for the integration of women into Latin American economic and social development with a view to the sixth session of the Regional Conference, to be held in Argentina in 1994; the latter meeting would also serve as the preparatory regional meeting for the World Conference on Women. Given the importance of those tasks, it was necessary from the outset to involve the organizations dealing with the topic in the region and reflect their views in order to achieve increasingly coordinated action. He briefly described the documents that the secretariat had submitted to the meeting and announced that in early September a meeting of the United Nations agencies connected with the topic of women would be held in Santiago in early September in order to brief them on the goals of the Presiding Officers.

8. The Prime Minister of the Netherlands Antilles said that the most important task before the current meeting was drafting the new regional plan of action in such a way that it would have an impact on the dynamic changes occurring in the world. Although the proposed regional plan would take the peculiar situations of individual subregions into account, it would emphasize the similarities in women's situations

and their common problems with a view to the sixth session of the Regional Conference, the World Conference on Women and the International Year of the Family. With respect to the family, improvements in the status of women had paradoxically led to a sharp increase in the number of female-headed households, and therefore further research needed to be carried out on the links between that advancement and domestic violence.

Report on activities from 1 June 1991 to 31 May 1992 (agenda item 2)

Report of the Chairman of the Presiding Officers

9. The Chairman said that the Presiding Officers had kept in touch with both ECLAC headquarters and the ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean. Her country was strongly committed to the activities arising from the resolutions adopted by the Regional Conference at its fifth session. Such activities included those intended to raise the population's awareness about health care, an area which had been severely affected by the adjustment policies; the work of the Institute for Perinatal Care, funded by the European Community, whose achievements could be applied to other Caribbean and Latin American countries; research on domestic violence and the need for integrated services in that regard; the seminar on women and managerial activities, organized in cooperation with non-governmental organizations; and the seminars on women and development policies.

10. As far as the resolution on women and politics was concerned, the Government of Curaçao had appointed a Commissioner for Education, while the national Government of the Netherlands Antilles had appointed a woman as the new Minister of Justice. Also, all the political parties currently had women's organizations. In the area of legislation, she indicated that planned actions focused on drafting laws concerning part-time jobs, marriage and divorce, and that it would be useful to have a compilation of new legislation on topics relating to women in the region.

Report of the Presiding Officers

11. The representative of Cuba said that her country was currently going through a very difficult period. Training activities for women were being carried out at the municipal level in women's centres, and a national committee for the International Year of the Family had been formed. Cuba cooperated with the network of governmental offices for women created by UNICEF as well as with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), together comprising the National Network. Finally, her country was keen on strengthening the documentation centre in order to have a database that could be used to conduct research into topics such as the double day's work performed by women, women's access to supervisory posts, and violence against women.

12. The representative of Guatemala reported that the National Bureau for Women's Affairs (ONAM) had carried out its activities at two levels: a) monitoring the programme designed to ensure greater participation of women in development which included, among other things, promotional and legal reform activities, policy measures for women in special situations, improving the organizational structure of ONAM and training women members of its assembly; b) decentralizing the Bureau's work in order to try to incorporate more women from the hinterland and boosting the presence of ONAM in the society.

With regard to the shortage of resources, she said that the Bureau had to be converted into an institution at a high decision-making level that enjoyed enough political and financial support to enable it to play the appropriate role in policies relating to women.

13. The representative of Mexico said that her country continued to work on a programme known as Women in Solidarity, targeted at extremely poor women, which was part of the National Solidarity Programme to assist the critically poor, whose number was estimated at a little over 30 million. There was also an ongoing programme on education, health and employment for indigenous women and another on political participation for other groups of women. At the international level, her country was participating in a UNICEF-sponsored programme of networks of women's bureaus in the countries of the region as well as in the Technical Cooperation Network of Institutions and Agencies in Support of Rural Women, organized by FAO. Finally she declared that her country was interested in hosting a meeting of the Presiding Officers in future but had two concerns to express at the current meeting. The first involved assigning coordinating roles to the agencies dealing with women's activities in the region in order to make the best use of the resources of all ongoing programmes, while the second concern, in addition to participating in regional preparations for the World Conference, was that a special secretary-general for the World Conference should be appointed who would be able to give it the high profile it deserved.

14. The representative of Argentina said that her country had achieved a number of results as far as the incorporation of women into development was concerned. Firstly, it had adopted Act 24012, which modified the Political Parties Act. It stipulated that at least 30% of all those standing for election for posts at the national level had to be women; and that no electoral judge could approve any list that did not meet this minimum requirement. Secondly, Argentina had established a bicameral commission to remove all articles that discriminated against women from the civil, criminal and labour codes. Thirdly, a public policy training course for women had been organized by the Council for the Coordination of Public Policies on Women and the National Government Services Institute. In cooperation with UNICEF, the Ministry of Education and Justice of the National Programme for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities for Women in Education, and a national commission had been set up to implement the proposals of the summit meeting on rural women. With respect to the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), efforts were being made to include the women's component in its supplementary protocols. Moreover, in view of the fact that a constituent assembly would soon be convened, the Government had begun to study the recent changes that had been made in Paraguay's constitution in order to standardize policies with respect to women. She also drew attention to certain laws that penalized violence against women and sexual harassment. Finally, she noted that more coordination was required between United Nations agencies and national governments, and national offices for women's affairs needed to be institutionalized at the highest level.

15. The Venezuelan Minister for the Advancement of Women said that the primary objective of her office, together with the President's Advisory Commission on Women, was to strengthen and channel the work of various public and non-governmental institutions towards activities relating to women. She briefly outlined the situation of women in Venezuela, described the institutional framework within which policies that reflected the views of women were being implemented, and mentioned some of the achievements in each of the areas that dealt with women's issues, depending on practical and strategic needs. Such achievements included the approval and allocation of funds for a project on the expansion of family planning and teenage pregnancy prevention services and for another on the rehabilitation, endowment, outfitting and expansion of cervical and breast cancer prevention services. There were also

other ongoing projects on the prevention of gender discrimination and in favour of equal opportunities within the educational system as well as a project on the prevention of violence against women and children. She also mentioned the establishment of three networks of non-governmental organizations for the coordination and strengthening of the activities of women's groups in various social areas and noted that the obstacles that had been encountered in trying to implement those activities included: the lack of resources and of middle and high-level personnel trained in the analysis, planning and management of projects relating to women; the cultural barriers that existed at the top decision-making levels of the civil service; the lack of information on existing capacities in other countries; and the need for better coordination of multilateral resources at the national and regional levels. She expressed the hope that a representative from Latin America and the Caribbean would be appointed as secretary-general of the 1995 World Conference.

16. The Minister of Health, Labour and Women's Affairs of Saint Kitts and Nevis referred to the activities carried out in her country, which she considered representative of others being conducted in countries of the Caribbean Community. Her Ministry, established in 1984, benefited from the advisory services of an Interministerial Council consisting of a senior female civil servant from each government ministry and department. Its tasks included sensitizing the public, especially men in decision-making positions, on gender-related issues through radio programmes; the conduct of educational workshops and seminars; and outside training and vocational education both in traditional and non-traditional skills, such as carpentry and masonry. Also stressed were income-generating projects and the provision of seed capital for activities by groups of women. In relation to legislation, plans had been made to reform laws on the family and on violence against women, for which purpose the experiences of other countries would be of interest. Lastly, she addressed an inquiry to the agencies present regarding the availability of funds for projects and programmes to benefit women.

Report on secretariat activities

17. The representative of the ECLAC secretariat expressed satisfaction at the participation of representatives of United Nations bodies and of the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW/OAS), and indicated the importance of coordination in the preparations in Latin America and the Caribbean for the 1994 session of the Regional Conference and the 1995 World Conference. He then introduced the secretariat documents prepared for the current meeting, emphasizing actions carried out in fulfilment of the resolutions issued by the Regional Conference. The secretariat had elaborated a summary of the actions and programmes of United Nations bodies and an outline of the new plan (resolution on the new regional plan of action on the integration of women into the economic and social development of Latin America and the Caribbean); had prepared an initial study on domestic violence (resolution on women and violence); and had commissioned a preliminary document on women in the informal sector and conducted a meeting on women entrepreneurs (resolution on women and human resources). Moreover, at its twenty-fourth session, ECLAC had endorsed the report of the fifth session of the Regional Conference and adopted a resolution in support of regional preparatory activities for the 1995 World Conference. Representatives of United Nations bodies had been invited to meet at ECLAC headquarters on 3 and 4 September 1992 to discuss future activities related to the new plan of action. The activities of ECLAC relating to women centred on two main themes, in accordance with the mandates of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Regional Conference: improving the situation of women in low-income sectors, and improving the integration of all women, regardless of their socio-economic status, into society.

18. With respect to the projects which ECLAC was carrying out or developing, he drew attention to four new projects for which financing was being negotiated with possible donors. The first two, which were under consideration by the Government of the Netherlands, focused on female heads of household in certain Central American countries. One of them, on improving the economic conditions of women heads of household in selected communities in three countries, sought to train women to channel some of the resources they received regularly as remittances from abroad into productive activities, so as to improve their standard of living. The other dealt with the use of remittances to build homes and workshops, promoting capital formation in selected communities in the three countries. Another project for which ECLAC was negotiating financing was on information for policy-making for women in the informal sector, which was being examined with the Canadian International Development Agency as a result of that country's indication of interest. That two-year project, which would be carried out in five countries of the region, would attempt to help improve the conditions of some women working in the informal sector under circumstances of extreme poverty. He also mentioned a three-year project which ECLAC would submit to the Government of Italy; it was intended to determine how the phenomena of teenage mothers, female heads of household and poverty were interrelated, through research to be conducted in six countries of the region.

19. Lastly, he reported that ECLAC had put into practice an internal mechanism to ensure that all new projects financed with extra-budgetary funds specifically took into account their impact on women, as either possible participants in, or beneficiaries of, the activities and results; it was expected that the mechanism would soon be applied to projects already under way.

Statements by agency representatives¹

20. The representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said that the main concern of the UNDP Gender in Development Programme was to promote the mainstreaming of gender into the work of UNDP in such priority areas as the environment, poverty, grass-roots participation and the transfer of technology through technical cooperation among developing countries, as well as into its country programmes and institutional publications, such as the Human Development Report. It also dealt with the situation of women within UNDP, for which purpose it conducted an in-house training programme. Since it had a shortage of personnel and no separate budget, strategic action had been proposed whereby the services of consultants would be used to develop national capacities to handle gender-related topics. To that end, it intended to prepare rosters of regional consultants who could be trained to work on gender issues, in accordance with the parameters of UNDP activities.

21. The representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), after thanking ECLAC for inviting her agency to participate, summarized the cooperation activities of UNICEF in support of women. Following an assessment of its regional programme for women, which had included the participation of other bodies and of outside consultants, UNICEF had decided that, i) instead of continuing to support diverse projects, it would concentrate on actions of mass impact in the medium and long term, under a strategy which sought to change the structural causes of the situation of women; ii) would continue projects already under way with a view to institutionalizing them; and iii) would

¹ The ECLAC secretariat can provide, at the request of delegations, detailed information on the activities of these bodies.

strengthen coordination with other United Nations bodies. All of the UNICEF offices in the region included the topic of women in their programmes of cooperation with countries. The regional programme, led by the Regional Office, was based on five projects: i) work with legislators to encourage them to include on their agendas the topic of women, which would be dealt with, for example, by the Andean Parliament at its next regular session and by the Central American Parliament; ii) a regional network of offices for women, whose work had already begun in Central and South America, and had begun to be studied in the Caribbean; iii) cooperation with the next General Conference of the Latin American Episcopal Council of the Catholic Church, with a view to having the topic of women included in its subsequent document; iv) research and publication of the results thereof, especially with respect to the female child, which had been chosen as the theme for the 1990s; and v) topics being discussed in the region, such as violence against women, women and environment and the revision of legislative codes and constitutions.

22. The representative of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) reported that her organization had nine focal points for its activities in Latin America and the Caribbean, dealing with various areas. In the field of statistics, ideas and methodologies for gathering data on the situation of women were being studied, and a number of seminars had been held in Africa and one in Latin America (in Caracas); and there was a possibility that others would be held in the region. With regard to drinking water and environmental sanitation and new and renewable energy sources, interest in aspects concerning the environment had grown, and studies had been carried out in preparation for the elaboration of training materials. In the field of university studies on gender, educational materials were available, though to date they existed only in English. In communications, research was being conducted in three countries of the region: Argentina, Colombia and the Dominican Republic. Lastly, methods were being developed for evaluating training programmes.

23. The representative of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) said that her institution had acquired a more significant presence on the international scene, and had simultaneously increased its budget. Certain shortcomings in the work done thus far in Latin America and the Caribbean were to be remedied within the institution's current process of transition, which was aimed at inter-agency cooperation to enhance the region's contribution to the 1995 World Conference. Microeconomic and income-generating projects had been put aside; currently, the basic concern was to incorporate women's concerns into the mainstream of development by changing the mainstream so that it no longer excluded the particular issues relating to women and developing countries. New areas were opening up, such as the defence of women's rights, rural and urban training programmes on gender-related topics and support for social and ethnic movements and organizations of women in difficult circumstances. UNIFEM also wished to increase its participation in addressing topics such as violence, the environment and methodologies for participation, and to approach new areas in cooperation with other United Nations bodies, with Governments and with non-governmental organizations.

24. The representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recalled that his agency had been born of the desire to preserve world peace through education, science and culture. Concern for the topic of women cut across all of the seven major programmes undertaken by UNESCO. The subject of education was particularly important for women, in terms of both personal development and the development of the next generation. The time when education had concentrated on imparting the skills necessary for survival was over; a new era had begun, in which survival had come to depend on education and knowledge. In that regard, he recalled that the Declaration of the World Conference on Education for All had attached great importance to the topic of

women. Moreover, UNESCO had commissioned studies on the roots of violence. Lastly, he expressed concern about the findings of recent studies which showed that the performance of males, both children and adults, was currently inferior to that of females at all levels of education, and said that the phenomenon required analysis. UNESCO was prepared to consider the recommendations of the current meeting in preparing its budget for the 1994-1995 biennium.

25. The representative of the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) said there was a need for close cooperation with the work of ECLAC, and noted in particular the work of IACW on the problem of violence against women, which had given rise to a draft convention currently under consideration by the member Governments of the Organization of American States (OAS) for subsequent ratification. Also significant were the efforts made in the area of women and environment, as well as the inter-American conference on democracy in America and the role of women in decision-making, to be held in Buenos Aires from 24 to 28 August 1992.

26. The representatives of countries participating in the meeting then posed specific questions to the representatives of the agencies and of the ECLAC secretariat. They showed particular interest in the reasons for the work of UNICEF with the Catholic Church; in that agency's activities in the Caribbean; in submitting recommendations for the meeting of United Nations bodies to be held at ECLAC headquarters in September; and in the roster of consultants originally proposed by the representative of UNDP and echoed in various statements. In addition, a number of delegations agreed on the need to define precisely what was understood by training on gender issues, pointing out that such training was lacking at the government level in a number of countries.

27. The secretariat representative indicated that the discussion had resulted in the emergence of a more unified approach that looked beyond small projects, as well as a number of ideas on the directory of regional experts, though some methodological problems would be encountered in its elaboration. The joint document prepared by ECLAC and UNESCO on education and knowledge, and submitted to the latest session of the Commission, provided an ample basis for collaboration between the two organizations. In response to the concerns expressed by representatives of Caribbean countries, he expressed regret over the current personnel shortage at ECLAC subregional headquarters in Port of Spain, which had not been resolved owing to the current United Nations hiring freeze imposed by the Secretary-General.

Fifth 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)

28. The secretariat representative began the discussion on agenda item 3 by describing actions taken in relation to the resolutions of the Conference (mentioned in paragraph 17 above). In reply to inquiries by delegations, he reiterated that ECLAC had adopted a resolution on women at its twenty-fourth session. The delegations of countries participating in the session consisted of representatives appointed by each country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and were thus designated by the Governments themselves, which in that case had not sent persons working in areas related to women.

29. The delegations evaluated the fifth session of the Regional Conference, noting that it had fully met its objective of serving as a point of encounter for Governments, since the countries of the region, and particularly those of the Caribbean, had been widely represented at the meeting. However, it was generally agreed that there had not been enough time for analysis of substantive issues because much of

the meeting had been taken up by the reading of country reports. In that regard, some of the Presiding Officers said that the next session of the Regional Conference should last longer, work with a shorter agenda and include informal subregional meetings. It was also suggested that guidelines should be drawn up for the preparation of national reports, which should be sent to the ECLAC secretariat sufficiently in advance so that they could be distributed along with the session documents. If those conditions were met, the sixth session of the Conference could truly become a forum for debate and analysis of priorities and trends in the situation of women in the region.

30. The delegations pointed out the need to strengthen activities related to women within the work programme of ECLAC, especially in the various subregions. The secretariat representative said that although such activities were insufficient owing to the shortage of resources, it must be remembered that resources allocated to areas relating to women had increased considerably in both absolute and percentage terms, despite the general situation of severe financial constraints.

31. Some delegations also agreed that the meetings of the Presiding Officers should be longer and stressed the role the Presiding Officers should play in preparing the next regional plan of action.

Group of Experts for the preparation of a new regional plan of action on the integration of women into Latin American and Caribbean economic and social development (agenda item 4)

32. The Director of the Social Development Division of ECLAC, introducing the item, said that, given the difficult social situation in Latin America, aggravated by the crisis which had begun in the early 1980s, activities to improve the situation of working-class women warranted special attention in the future plan of action. He gave a few examples of the ever-worsening social situation in Latin America, particularly the increase in low-productivity jobs, the decline in average per capita income, unequal income distribution, and the rise in poverty. He also referred to the difficulties expected to occur in the 1990s, in view of the less than favourable economic and demographic trends in most countries.

33. Against that backdrop, he suggested three types of activities to upgrade the living and working conditions of working-class women. The first type involved improving the situation of adult women in the context of their family roles and their work, operating on the assumption that even if, basically, their places in society (whether as farm-worker, domestic, head of household, etc.), were not about to change, their living conditions could still be improved by the right social and income policies. Second, an effort must be made to prevent poor working and living conditions from being passed on from mother to daughter; to that end, he stressed the need to raise the level of education of working-class girls and young women and establish a connection between those achievements and better jobs and higher income. Lastly, the two types of activities mentioned above could be carried out only if working-class women could participate more fully and apply greater pressure at the local and national levels. That should be a third high-priority type of activity.

34. The representative of the ECLAC secretariat highlighted the importance of gender analysis, especially at the regional level. Job and salary discrimination, and biased cultural models which frequently no longer corresponded to the real-life situation of women, were still very common. Consideration should be given to current international and regional scenarios, in which there tended to be a discrepancy between women's expectations and their genuine options. Demographic indicators showed that women's life span had increased by 15 years since the 1950s and the average number of children they bore had decreased from 5.9 in 1950 to an estimated 1.9 in the 1990s. Such indicators reflected changes that

affected the situation of women in a very real way. It was also very important to analyse the new models that could be adopted by young women, as women's issues had thus far been debated within a very narrow age group. Lastly, he noted that empowerment on the one hand and, on the other, the linkage of the gender issue to the ECLAC proposal on changing production patterns with social equity should be taken into account in preparing the new plan.

35. The representative of Venezuela began by referring to the need for the new plan of action to take into account certain methodological considerations of the utmost importance. The approach should be strategic and not prescriptive, and the plan should be concrete. The gender viewpoint should also be introduced and, to that end, ECLAC should undertake a critical analysis of the approaches taken by intergovernmental organizations over time (such as their perspectives on poverty eradication, social equity, efficiency, empowerment and others). That would establish a common terminology. Second, in substance, the new plan should conform to several previous documents, *inter alia*, the Nairobi Strategies, regional diagnostic studies and the documents from the two most recent ECLAC sessions, and the resolutions recently adopted at the thirty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held in Vienna, in anticipation of the World Conference in 1995. That should provide a sounder basis for the preparation of the plan from a clear gender perspective.

36. The representative of Mexico referred to some of the obstacles that continued to affect the integration of women in development and which should be taken into account in formulating the regional plan of action. The plan should demonstrate respect for the existence of specific national traits and, in that context, promote equality among women within each country. The Plan should address the need to apply the gender dimension in programmes and projects, particularly in the case of programmes for poor or marginalized women. Family size must also be taken into account, in view of its impact on the situation of women. She stressed that the plan should accord priority to education, vocational counseling, information and professional training for women. Lastly, the regional plan of action should also ensure close coordination both within countries and among the organizations of the United Nations system, avoiding as much as possible the duplications which sometimes occurred and which amounted to a waste of resources. In conclusion, she reiterated the need for the plan to equip Governments with concrete tools for coping with the most serious problems affecting women.

37. The representative of the Netherlands Antilles made suggestions for the new regional plan of action. She began by saying that the current document did not include the Caribbean region, which was one reason why it was not satisfactory. The documents put out by ECLAC, such as those on changing production patterns with social equity and on an integrated approach, did not fully recognize the Caribbean dimension either. Women had gained a new awareness of the environmental issue and such issues as the allocation of funds, technical assistance, the need for human resources development, the updating of statistics and indicators, the establishment of data banks and the need for cooperation, collaboration and networking recognized by the relevant resolution adopted by the Conference at its fifth session. It was essential to review the activities proposed and implemented by ECLAC since 1977 with a view to the new plan of action.

38. The representative of Guatemala reiterated the need to pay due regard to the specific traits of societies like her own.

39. The representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis requested more information on the procedure for appointing the experts who would prepare the plan and expressed her concern about being able to include

specifically Caribbean perspectives in it. She also asked the secretariat for an account of the women's activities conducted in the past three years.

40. The representative of Cuba supported the Venezuelan and Mexican statements and said that the characteristics of the different subregions should be taken into account in elaborating the plan. In addition, the gender-based approach should be considered on two fronts: a) policy-making for women and b) public dissemination. She also drew attention to the need for the plan to raise the issue of cultural models with a view to preventing the perpetuation of sexist values and a return to conservative values concerning women and the family, and also to address the issue of empowerment of women, as that would signify a change in the administrative structure of countries.

41. Some of the organizations present recalled declarations signed by the Latin American and Caribbean countries in other forums held recently, such as the World Conference on Education for All, the World Summit for Children, the recent United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the Summit on the Economic Advancement of Rural Women, organized by the First Ladies of six developing countries, and suggested that their contents should be taken into account in formulating the plan.

42. Topics concerning education for health and nutrition, AIDS prevention and others along those lines were also mentioned.

43. The representative of UNDP pointed to the need for various international organizations to assess their efforts to introduce gender training at all levels of their own organizations.

44. The representative of UNIFEM referred to the ideas expressed on coordination among international organizations and termed positive the agreement on issues unanimously deemed to be priorities. The role of international organizations should not be to provide sectoral services—that was what Governments should be doing—but rather to make strategic use of their available resources in order to ensure the presence of the gender issue in all sectoral activities.

45. The representative of the ECLAC subregional headquarters in Port of Spain said that she had assumed responsibility for women's activities because the female staff member normally in charge of women's issues had requested special leave. Questions had been answered and the bibliography on women was being updated for inclusion in the Caribbean Information System for Economic and Social Planning (CARISPLAN) data bank and the Caribbean Documentation Centre. Requests from the Government of Saint Lucia and the Government of Dominica for technical assistance had been handled and work was being done on non-governmental organizations concerned with the advancement of women and other disadvantaged groups.

46. The director of women's issues in Central America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean said that her unit conducted women's activities as part of its work within the Social Development Division. Among its main activities were preparation of projects to improve the situation of female heads of household in three Central American countries, the updating and systematizing of data on the situation of women in the region and the exchange of information with Government offices, non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies concerned with women's issues.

47. The representative of Cuba reiterated her country's interest in intensifying work on women's issues in the subregions. Additional financing would have to be sought for the necessary posts.

48. The delegations then took up the question of the composition of the group of experts for the preparation of a new regional plan of action. After an exchange of views on the subject, the delegations approved the following text by consensus:

AGREEMENT

The Presiding Officers decided to hold their fifteenth meeting in Mexico City on 29 and 30 October, following the first meeting, to be held from 26 to 28 October, of the group of experts to prepare the new plan of action on the basis of a draft to be elaborated by the secretariat.

The group of experts shall consist of three of the Presiding Officers and three outside experts from Latin America and the Caribbean. The Presiding Officers who will participate as experts in the first meeting of the group shall be those representing Argentina, Cuba and Saint Kitts and Nevis; the Presiding Officers shall designate three others from among themselves to participate in subsequent meetings. Other Presiding Officers may attend the meetings as observers.

The secretariat shall prepare a draft or outline to facilitate the work of the group.

49. The delegations also approved by consensus a timetable for the forthcoming meetings of the Presiding Officers. Following the October 1992 meeting, in 1993 an initial meeting will be held in Venezuela (in May or June) and if possible a second at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago, probably in November. In 1994 the meeting of the Presiding Officers will immediately precede the meeting of the Regional Conference in Buenos Aires.

50. In reply to inquiries from various delegations, the secretariat representative clarified some points concerning the amount budgeted by ECLAC for activities relating to women, and promised to provide specific figures at the October meeting.

51. The secretariat representative also promised to send an official request asking the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs to invite the Chairman of the Presiding Officers to its annual meetings in Vienna.

Fifteenth 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 (agenda item 5)

52. As indicated in paragraph 49 above, the delegations accepted Mexico's offer to serve as host country for the meeting, and decided to hold the meeting under the terms of the agreement.

Other matters (agenda item 6)

53. With respect to preparations for the sixth session of the Regional Conference, the Presiding Officers considered the recommendations recently adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its

thirty-sixth session, which attached priority importance to the regional conferences as part of the preparatory process for the World Conference. Accordingly, attention was drawn to the secretariat's efforts to strengthen the funding for the sixth session so that it could be extended for two extra days, thereby serving as the regional preparatory meeting for the World Conference.

54. The representative of IACW, on behalf of that organization, invited ECLAC to its next meeting, to be held in Buenos Aires in August, on democracy and the role of women in decision-making, and requested the Commission to submit a document on that subject. She also invited ECLAC and the Chairman of the Presiding Officers to the twenty-sixth biennial assembly of IACW, to be held in Washington in October 1992, and again requested ECLAC to submit a document.

55. The representative of the Netherlands Antilles announced that her delegation would provide the secretariat with an analytical summary of the statements made by countries at the fifth session of the Regional Conference.

Adoption of the report

56. The Rapporteur introduced the draft report, indicating that it would be completed and translated at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago.

57. The report was adopted without comment.

Closure of the meeting

58. At the end of the meeting, the representative of Mexico, on behalf of the participants, expressed thanks to the host country for its warm hospitality and to the Chairman, Prime Minister Maria Liberia Peters, for her effective moderation of the debates.

59. The Secretary of the Commission, for his part, joined in the expressions of gratitude and said that the meeting had been particularly important and fruitful. A valuable exchange had taken place with the specialized agencies which would facilitate future coordination. Moreover, ECLAC had received encouragement and support for its activities on the topic of women, which gave it grounds for negotiating more focus on such activities within the institution. He had learned much from the substantive debate at the meeting, and especially appreciated the contribution of the delegation of the host country, which would enable the secretariat to better reflect the perspective of the Caribbean countries in its documents. He ended by reiterating his thanks to the Prime Minister of the Netherlands Antilles.

60. The Prime Minister, Chairman of the meeting, said that it had been a great pleasure for her country to host the delegations and to organize a dynamic, fruitful and frank discussion on the topic of women, which was an essential component of the broader theme of human welfare. Thanking the Vice-Chairman for her fine work and to the secretariat for its support, she declared closed the Fourteenth 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.