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REPORT OF THE EIGHTH 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

(Guatemala City, Guatemala, 26 September 1988)

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place and date

1. Pursuant to 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 session 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 on Women to serve as a liaison between the member governments and the ECLAC Secretariat in the integration of women into development.
2. In compliance with this mandate, the Presiding Officers elected at the third Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean held their eighth meeting on 26 September 1988 at Guatemala City.

Attendance

3. The meeting was attended by Presiding Officers from the following member countries: Argentina, Ecuador and Mexico. The meeting was chaired by Ms. Hilda Anderson Nevárez de Rojas (Mexico). The delegation of Cuba and a representative of the United Nations International Institute for Research and Training for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) also attended as observers.

Agenda

4. The Presiding Officers adopted the following agenda for their eighth meeting:
 1. Adoption of the agenda
 2. Report of the Chairman of the Presiding Officers of the third Regional Conference on Women
 3. Organization of the fourth Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean
 - a) Documents prepared by the Secretariat
 - b) Draft agenda and election of Officers
 - c) Objectives of the fourth Regional Conference and organization of work: evaluation of the status of women in the region
 4. Other matters.

B. SUMMARY OF THE DEBATES

5. The Chairman welcomed the participants and thanked them for their help in preparing the Meeting. In accordance with agenda item 2, she then proceeded to give the report on the activities of the Presiding Officers since the last session held.

6. She first drew attention to the meetings held since the third Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean at both the world and the regional level. She went on to refer to the progress made in the member countries as a result of all those activities, drawing attention in particular to the efforts made in her own country --Mexico-- after it had hosted the third Conference.

7. The representative of the Secretariat expressed gratitude to the Government of Mexico and to Ms. Hilda Anderson Nevárez de Rojas, for the able way in which the tasks of the Presiding Officers had been handled from 1983 to the present.

8. The Chairman then asked the representative of ECLAC to take the floor with regard to agenda item 3. The representative introduced the documents prepared for the fourth Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, noting the importance given to the whole subject of women in the activities conducted by ECLAC and pointing out that there were two working papers and a number of reference documents relating to what seemed to be the most important aspects of the situation of women in the conditions of economic crisis currently experienced by the region.

9. With regard to agenda item 3.b), it was explained that, as was customary at meetings of the Commission, the draft agenda and election of Officers would be discussed at the meeting of heads of all delegations called for the following day. In this connection, the participants were reminded of the criteria adopted by the outgoing Presiding Officers with regard to the election of officers; i.e., that the offices would be rotated among the various countries members of the Commission, that the offices would be limited to those of Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur and that the principle of equitable geographical distribution would be observed in such a way that one Central American country, one Caribbean country, one country from the Andean Group, and one from the Southern Cone would be represented. It was agreed that the participants in the conference should be reminded of these criteria.

10. With regard to the objectives of the fourth Conference and the organization of its work (agenda item 3.c)), at the request of the Chairman, the representative of the Secretariat suggested that after the general debates had been held in plenary, a working group should be set up to draft a declaration containing an appraisal of the status of women in the region, with particular attention given to the changes caused by the crisis. In respect of the plenary meetings, it was suggested that the country representatives should address agenda items 4, 5 and 6 comprehensively, considering them as a whole. As for the declaration, the Secretariat had prepared a text which might be used as an input in drafting it if the countries so decided.

11. At the suggestion of the Chairman, the participants agreed to accept the text prepared by the Secretariat as an input in drafting the declaration referred to above.

12. Going on to agenda item 4 (other matters), the Chairman asked the delegations present to give their points of view concerning the matters to be dealt with at the Conference. The representative of Argentina said her country attached great importance to matters relating to women and in that respect noted that two government departments dealing with women had been established. The representative of Mexico said her country had great expectations with regard to the Conference, noting in particular the review of legislation which discriminated against women, the designation of sexual harassment as a criminal offence and the increase in the number of child-care centres and centres providing protection against family violence. The representative of Cuba, who was attending the meeting as an observer, said that in her view the crucial item on the agenda was the one which related to the impact of the crisis on the status of women, a subject which was linked to that of the debt of the third-world countries. The representative of INSTRAW said that the documentation submitted by the Secretariat made it possible to analyse the progress made since the Nairobi Conference and also drew attention to the importance of taking the economic crisis into consideration in appraising the status of women in the region.

13. At the end of the meeting, the Chairman expressed gratitude that her country had been chosen to host the third Regional Conference and to head the Presiding Officers during the past five years and stressed the need to keep making progress in changing the mentality of the societies of the region with regard to the status of women, referring to the progress made in Mexico in that respect. She also expressed gratitude for the tasks performed by ECLAC in preparation for the fourth Regional Conference.

