

UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC COMMISSION
FOR LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN



1948 - 1988

ECLAC

Distr.
LIMITED

LC/L.435 (MDM.7/3)
2 February 1988

ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

REPORT OF THE SEVENTH 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

(Mexico City, 30 October 1987)

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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 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 on Women to serve as a liaison between the governments members of ECLAC and its Secretariat in the integration of women into development.

2. In compliance with that provision, 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 seventh Meeting at the ECLAC Subregional Office in Mexico City on 30 October 1987.

Attendance

3. The meeting was attended by Presiding Officers from the following member countries: Argentina, Ecuador, Guyana and Mexico. The Meeting was chaired by Ms. Hilda Anderson (Mexico).1/

Agenda

4. The Presiding Officers adopted the following agenda for their seventh Meeting:

1. Adoption of the provisional agenda
2. Summary of activities carried out by the ECLAC Secretariat in the field of women in development since the third Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean
3. Organization of the fourth Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean
 - a) place and date
 - b) provisional agenda

- c) preparations to be made by the Secretariat in connection with documentation, the engagement of consultants and the financial aspects of the conference
- 4. Other matters
- 5. Report of the meeting.

B. SUMMARY OF THE DEBATES

5. The Chairman welcomed the other Presiding Officers and said she was gratified that it had been possible to hold the meeting in Mexico. The majority of the countries members of ECLAC had followed the recommendations adopted at past meetings on the integration of women into development although in some cases there had been problems of an economic nature or problems relating to armed strife which had stood in the way of the achievement of the objectives set. For that reason it was of the utmost importance to strengthen the commitment of all the women of Latin America and the Caribbean to the struggle for social peace and economic stability in the region. This would produce conditions favourable to the achievement of full development vis-à-vis the advancement of women; without a stronger commitment, all the efforts carried out would be no more than a reflection of praiseworthy aspirations. She expressed her own country's willingness and commitment in respect of working for the integration of women into all social activities and for full development for them within the principles of the freedom of peoples and their right to self-determination and that of an equitable international economic order.

6. The Secretary of ECLAC addressed the participants on behalf of the Executive Secretary, indicating that ECLAC had been actively working on the integration of women in development since 1973, when the Secretariat had been entrusted with the task of carrying out studies on women's participation in the development of the region. In 1977 the Commission had convened a regional conference on the integration of women (Havana, June 1977), which had adopted the Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development. That plan, which had subsequently been ratified by ECLAC and the Economic and Social Council, had established the Regional Conference as a permanent subsidiary body of ECLAC meeting every three years. The Plan of Action provided that the Presiding Officers of the Conference should continue in their functions until the next Conference was held and should act as a link between governments and the Secretariat.

7. Reference was made to the continuation of the financial crisis affecting the United Nations and to the measures taken by governments to deal with it. One such measure had been the establishment of the Special Committee to prepare an in-depth study on the developmental structure of the United Nations and its economic and social operations. The participants were informed of the results of the meeting of the ECLAC Committee of the Whole held in New York in August 1987, and special reference was made to the ratification of the Commission's intergovernmental structure, which included the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into Development. The Secretariat

supported the idea of holding the fourth Regional Conference, scheduled for 1988, and one member government had been approached in that connection, but in the end nothing positive had emerged. At the end of his statement, the Secretary reiterated the importance attached by the Secretariat to matters relating to women and expressed his hopes for the success of the seventh meeting of the Presiding Officers.

8. The Chief of the ECLAC Unit for the Integration of Women in Development expressed gratitude for the welcome accorded to the meeting by the Government of Mexico, for the presence of the delegates from the countries represented by the Presiding Officers and for the Chairman's statement. She reaffirmed the importance attached by the Secretariat to the holding of the seventh meeting of the Presiding Officers, particularly because it was a preparatory meeting for the fourth Regional Conference for the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean --one of the few subsidiary bodies of the Commission. She also called attention to the increasing importance which had been attached to the Conference within the context of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women up to the year 2000,^{2/} which, having been adopted by the General Assembly,^{3/} constituted the guidelines for programmes and policies at regional, subregional and national level. In conclusion, she expressed confidence that, in spite of the unfavourable financial situation which the United Nations system was experiencing, the ECLAC programme for the integration of women into the economic and social development of Latin America and the Caribbean would remain fully operative.

Summary of activities carried out by the ECLAC Secretariat in the field of women in development since the third Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (Agenda item 2)

9. The Chief of the ECLAC Unit on the Integration of Women in Development described the activities carried out by the ECLAC Secretariat in the field of women in development since the third Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in Development held in Mexico City in 1983. She pointed out that since that Conference the activities provided for in the programme had continued to be carried out. Those activities were based on the following topics: women and development planning; studies, research and evaluation of specific situations in which women in the region found themselves; the strengthening of national and regional institutions and, finally, co-ordination and co-operation with other organizations in the United Nations system and with non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. During the period under review, the Unit had worked in close harmony with the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and in particular with its Branch for the Advancement of Women, which had acted as a co-ordinating centre in respect of all the preparations for the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace held at Nairobi in 1985. In 1984 ECLAC had organized a Latin American and Caribbean regional meeting at Havana in preparation for the Nairobi Conference.^{4/}

10. She said that the activities relating to women and development planning had been carried out in three phases. During the first phase, a conceptual frame of reference had been devised; in the second phase fellowships had been awarded to women planners from various countries of the region enabling them to attend courses offered by the Latin American and Caribbean Institute of Economic and Social Planning (ILPES), a member of the ECLAC system; during the third phase, a workshop-course had been held at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago in October and November 1986, which had been attended by 35 women from most of the countries of Latin America. Plans were being made to hold a similar workshop-course for the Andean area in December 1987. With regard to studies and research, she told the Presiding Officers that over 70 such activities, including the drafting and publication of three books, had been carried out. A considerable number of the studies had been made as inputs to meetings organized by the Secretariat in connection with three broad topics —the diversity of situations and living conditions of women and families classified among the urban poor, with particular attention given to their incorporation in the labour market; the usefulness of household surveys in producing acceptable statistics on women and, finally, regional heterogeneity and diversity of positions occupied by young women within their own countries.

11. She went on to say that women's programme had not only carried out the activities mentioned above but had also provided technical assistance to a number of countries in the region, primarily for national institutions responsible for the integration of women in development. She drew attention in particular to the increasing number of national projects submitted to the United Nations Development Fund for Women and evaluated by the ECLAC Unit on the Integration of Women in Development. The subjects of those projects ranged from income-generating activities for poor women to training and information activities and the production of audio-visual materials. In respect of activities involving co-ordination and co-operation with other United Nations bodies as provided for in the programme of work, she said that close links were maintained with the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the Branch for the Advancement of Women in the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. The Unit exchanged a considerable amount of information with the Branch for the Advancement of Women on a variety of topics relating to women, all of them included in the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women up to the year 2000. Finally, she drew attention to the importance of and need for improved communications and information exchange in the countries and between ECLAC and the national centres responsible for co-ordinating issues relating to women.

12. The Women's Programme Co-ordinator in the ECLAC Subregional Office for the Caribbean gave an account of the activities carried out in her geographical area as from the third Regional Conference. She said concrete studies had been formulated on the repercussions had by the execution of national budgets on the incorporation of women into development, especially in the social sector (education, health, social security), within the context of the project on women and development planning. Those studies had been complemented by meetings held in a number of Caribbean countries for the purpose of facilitating consultations among sectoral planners and stimulating the integration of women's programmes into the national development process. Another important component of the programme of work was the project on women

traders in the subregion. A pilot study had been carried out in one country, and consultations had been held with government institutions with a view to extending the project to other countries in the subregion. As a result of those consultations, it had been possible to prepare additional studies, which had been published and circulated widely. The project had revealed the growing importance for the economies of the countries of the subregion of commercial activities carried out by women, some of whom were organized in groups while others operated on an individual basis. In order to facilitate the formation of associations of women traders, visual training material had been produced for the purpose of giving the women greater awareness, increasing their access to external resources and showing them how collective action could benefit them.

13. She reported on the production of a videotape showing the most important activities carried out in the Caribbean subregion during the United Nations Decade for Women. The tape had been shown at the World Conference at Nairobi and had been disseminated to all the Caribbean countries. Particular attention was drawn to the assistance provided to one country of the subregion with regard to the growing problem of violence against women. A seminar had been held at national level concerning the carrying out of research in that regard, and a document had been prepared on the subject. With regard to other activities carried out under the programme, she said that the programme had worked in close co-operation with subregional, government and non-governmental bodies in connection with subjects such as the role of women in Caribbean agriculture, the role of women at university level and inter-agency co-ordination and co-operation in connection with women's programmes in the Caribbean. In conclusion, she reported on the assistance provided in preparing for the World Conference at Nairobi and on the help given to national institutions in the formulation of projects, the identification of sources of financing and the exchange of information.

14. The delegation of a country represented by a Presiding Officer noted its concern over the United Nations financial crisis, which was seriously limiting the opportunity of countries to implement programmes they deemed important. In spite of the restrictions imposed, ECLAC should review its budget with the objective of trying to recover the resources and return to the levels of activity assigned to the women's programme at its inception. She suggested that in order to comply with the objectives of the projects and programmes established in implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, ECLAC should explore the possibility of obtaining extrabudgetary resources or contributions from United Nations specialized agencies.

15. The same delegation also expressed the view that there was need to strengthen co-ordination among the various bodies engaged in work relating to women. The country concerned was very eager to receive timely information on the activities carried out by ECLAC in connection with women so as to be able to mobilize channels of support. Stress was laid on the importance of disseminating information on activities carried out in different countries and the achievements recorded by them in order to provide examples for those who were working for the advancement of women in the region. Support was expressed for the work carried out by ECLAC in connection with women.

16. Another delegation thanked ECLAC for the report on activities carried out by the Secretariat and referred to some achievements and problems in connection with issues relating to women in the Caribbean. Stress was laid on the importance of co-ordination among bodies working for the advancement of women since in the country concerned there was often the feeling of working in a vacuum. In spite of the financial crisis, there were certain programmes which had to be implemented, and for that reason it would seem necessary to seek support from friendly countries and to use great care in examining other possibilities for financing it.

17. The delegation requested that the Women's Programme Co-ordinator in the ECLAC Subregional Office for the Caribbean should act as a liaison among countries in matters relating to women. It would be necessary to keep her informed of all important happenings in the region where women were concerned so that she could pass that information on to the Caribbean countries. Reference was made to the progress achieved in the Caribbean, particularly as regarding women in trade. In conclusion, it was proposed that the Presiding Officers should meet at least once a year given the importance the government of the delegation concerned attached to those meetings.

18. The representative of the country of another Presiding Officer noted the lack of co-ordination among people working in the field of women in the various countries of the region and drew attention to the benefits to be derived if the experience of other countries were made available. She also felt it was essential to demonstrate the importance of the subject in the national context of countries.

19. The Chairman mentioned the significant impact which the third Conference on the Integration of Women into Development had had on Mexico, the country in which the Conference had been held. The progress made included the establishment of the National Commission on Women. She stressed the importance of contacts with the ECLAC Secretariat and the value of exchanging experience among countries.

Organization of the fourth Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (Agenda item 3)

20. The Secretariat introduced a note on the fourth Regional Conference 5/ which had been prepared for the Presiding Officers and submitted a draft agenda for that conference to the participants for their consideration. It also told the Presiding Officers that some countries members of ECLAC had been approached with regard to the possibility of holding the Conference in one of them. As a result of those consultations, a verbal offer to hold the conference in Guatemala City had been made by a high authority of the Government of Guatemala, and a formal invitation was expected shortly.

21. One of the Presiding Officers indicated her desire that the fourth Conference should be held in an English-speaking Caribbean country, although it had not yet been possible to make a formal offer. The representative of Argentina then indicated her country's wish to host the Conference.

22. The Chairman expressed gratitude at the demonstration of willingness to host the Conference and indicated that it was very important that a formal offer should be received as soon as possible. To that end it was agreed to set a deadline of 30 November 1987 for receipt of formal offers. After that date, the Chairman would take a decision in that connection based on the offers received, giving consideration first to Guatemala, second to an English-speaking Caribbean country and third to Argentina.

23. It was agreed that the fourth Conference should be held in September 1988 and that the Presiding Officers would meet prior to that date to compare views on some aspects of the Conference, such as its Officers and the organization of work. Each of the Presiding Officers was entrusted with the task of carrying out the necessary advance consultations with other countries in their subregion.

24. There was a full exchange of views on the items to be discussed at the fourth Conference and on its objectives. One delegation noted that it was utopian to talk about development in the present time of crisis and suggested that it might be more appropriate to discuss the impact of the crisis on financing women's programmes. Another delegation supported that proposal, expanding the scope of the theme suggested to the impact of the crisis on women in general. Another delegation mentioned the importance of the subject of violence directed against women, rape and sexual harassment at work.

25. One delegation spoke of the need to attach importance to national programmes during the present period of crisis and to have recourse to volunteers and awareness programmes for the public. Among the items it would like to have discussed at the fourth Conference was ECLAC's women's programme and in particular the status of the Co-ordinator of women's programmes at the ECLAC Subregional Office for the Caribbean. Another delegation requested that the agenda for the Conference should be left open since it had no instructions from its government in that respect.

26. With the objective of mapping out its preparatory work for the fourth Conference, the Secretariat made several suggestions concerning the provisional agenda,^{6/} aimed at giving it the flexibility it would need in order to bring the documentation into line with the resources available. A draft provisional agenda of the kind it sought could of course be amended by the member countries at the beginning of the Conference itself.

Other matters (Agenda item 4)

27. One delegation suggested that ECLAC should circulate a questionnaire with a very simple format for use by governments in reporting on what was happening in connection with the advancement of women in their country and in particular on measures adopted to raise the status of women. Another delegation mentioned activities of that kind which had been carried out by other United Nations bodies, and it was proposed that the proposal should be discussed at the fourth Regional Conference. The Secretariat explained that attempts had already been made in that direction within the context of the integrated reporting system which had been approved by the General Assembly

but that the variety of interests of the different organizations prevented the adoption of one simple format.

28. One delegation said it would be useful to hold a preparatory meeting of Ministers responsible for matters relating to women in the Caribbean subregion in order to discuss the substantive items on the provisional agenda of the fourth Regional Conference and the proposals from the Caribbean subregion regarding the country which would represent it by providing one of the new Presiding Officers. It asked the Secretariat to examine the possibility of organizing an advanced meeting for that purpose.

Closure of the meeting

29. At the end of the meeting, some of the Presiding Officers took the floor, noting the importance of the items discussed and thanking the Secretariat for the work it had performed. Emphasis was placed on the importance of holding frequent meetings of the Presiding Officers. Finally, the Chairman thanked all the participants and pronounced the meeting closed.

Notes

1/ See the list of participants in annex 1 to this report.

2/ A/CONF.116/28/Rev.1.

3/ General Assembly resolution 40/108 of 12 December 1985.

4/ See ECLAC, Report of the Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean in Preparation for the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (LC/G.1339), Santiago, Chile, 1985.

5/ See ECLAC, Note of the Secretariat of ECLAC on the fourth Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/L.433(MDM.7/2)), Santiago, Chile, October 1987.

6/ See annex 2 to this report.

Annex 1

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Zita Coronado de Montes de Oca
Ministry of Health and Social Action
Office in charge of questions relating to women
Argentina

Alejandro Suárez,
Counsellor at the Embassy of Ecuador in Mexico
Ecuador

Ivonne Harewood-Benn
Minister of Information and of the Public Service
Guyana

Hilda Anderson Nevárez de Rojas
National Co-ordinator of the Commission on Women of the Government of the
Republic
Chairman of the seventh Meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional
Conference of the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social
Development of Latin America and the Caribbean
Mexico

Ambassador Aida González Martínez
Department of Foreign Relations
General Inspector of the Representation of Mexico in the Exterior
Mexico

Esther Duton Lemus
Department of Foreign Relations
Private secretary to the General Inspector and Technical Secretary at the
Mexican Commission on Women
Mexico

Annex 2

Fourth Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the
Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the
Caribbean

DRAFT PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Election of Officers
2. Adoption of the provisional agenda
3. Report of the Chairman of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on the work done since the third Regional Conference
4. Review and critical evaluation of some aspects of the status of women in the region, including their incorporation in the labour market, women heads of household and the role of women in commerce in the Caribbean.
 - a) Report of the Secretariat
 - b) General debate
5. Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women up to the year 2000 and their implementation at national, subregional and regional level, with consideration of the national machinery responsible for implementing the Strategies and of the abuse of women
6. The impact of the regional crisis on women
7. Regional preparations for the fifth Regional Conference
8. Other matters
9. Consideration and adoption of the report of the Conference.