

A CALL TO ACTION **TO BOOST**
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP
and Parity Democracy in the Americas



INTER-AMERICAN
taskFORCE
On Women's Leadership

With the support of
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Inter-American Task Force on Women's Leadership

During the VIII Summit of the Americas (Peru, April 2018), the leaders of the Americas approved the creation of the Inter-American Task Force on Women's Leadership, committing to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women through greater cooperation and synergies between institutions that promote women's leadership in the Americas and the Caribbean. Thirteen international and Inter-American institutions with recognized experience and programming in areas related to women's leadership are involved: the Organization of American States, through the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), ParlAmericas, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), CAF - Development Bank of Latin America, the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB), IDEA International, together with two civil society organizations: Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL) and the Committee of Latin America and the Caribbean for the Defense of Women's Rights (CLADEM).

A CALL TO ACTION TO BOOST WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND PARITY DEMOCRACY IN THE AMERICAS

This publication is an initiative of the partner institutions of the Inter-American Task Force on Women's Leadership

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"The opinions expressed, arguments used, and policy recommendations do not necessarily reflect the official point of view of the executive boards nor the Member States that are part of each of the partner institutions of the Inter-American Task Force on Women's Leadership."

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INTRODUCTION



The **Ninth Summit of the Americas, “Building a Sustainable, Resilient, and Equitable Future,”** represents an extraordinary opportunity for accountability to deliver on the commitments made at the Eighth Summit of the Americas, promoting women’s leadership and dialogue and mobilizing the action of governments and broad sectors of society in the face of regional challenges, including recovery from the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the strengthening of democratic governance, among others.

Women’s leadership constitutes a crosscutting element in all discussions. However, it is particularly relevant to governance since the participation of women in decision-making spaces is essential for democracy, sustainable development and the region’s recovery.

States have obligations and commitments to women’s human rights, assumed in international human rights instruments and the agreements adopted by different world and regional conferences, including the last Summit of the Americas and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Although it is possible to highlight major milestones in recognizing and guaranteeing women’s human rights and increasing their representation in different spheres in the Americas, women’s parity and substantive equality and autonomy remain a major challenge.

The region has undergone significant social and political instability since the last Lima Summit held in 2018, which, together with the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to a slowdown in economic growth and a multidimensional crisis. Several countries have faced demonstrations or protests in the light of deteriorating living conditions and the pressures created by the pandemic. Some have suffered attacks on their democratic systems, while others face serious threats and public security crises, indicating the need to redouble efforts to achieve peace, prosperity and equality in the region.

International and regional organizations, with special emphasis on those comprising the [Inter-American Task Force on Women's Leadership](#), as well as the feminist and women’s movement, have highlighted that the presence of women in key decision-making spaces is essential to ensuring that the response and recovery from these crises are sustainable and do not

deepen pre-existing gaps¹. They have also stressed that the achievement of women’s rights and the participation of women in decision-making processes are fundamental to democratic governance. The aspiration is to achieve a “parity democracy”² in which substantive equality and parity between men and women become the backbone of the transformations promoted by inclusive States³.

This document, developed jointly by the 13 institutions composing the Inter-American Task Force on Women’s Leadership, seeks to contribute to these reflections and call for action to promote women’s leadership and parity democracy in the Americas.

¹ UN Women, 2020. IACHR, 2020. CIM/OAS, 2020.

² The English translation of “democracia paritaria,” which refers to democracy with parity.

³ Regulatory Framework to Consolidate Parity Democracy.

***WOMEN'S
LEADERSHIP IN
INTERNATIONAL
AND REGIONAL
CONVENTIONS AND
COMMITMENTS***



Women's participation in decision-making enjoys a broad legal and normative political staging. States have approved various agreements in the region to recognize women's political rights. Each agreement has greater specificity and depth from the logic of the progressiveness of human rights.

MAIN AGREEMENTS AND COMMITMENTS ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING, LEADERSHIP AND PARITY

- ▶ [Inter-American Convention on the Granting of Civil Rights to Women \(1948\)](#) *"The American States agree to grant women the same civil rights that men enjoy" (OAS, 1948, Article 1).*

- ▶ [Convention on the Political Rights of Women adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations \(1953\)](#) *"Women shall be entitled to hold public office and exercise all public functions, established by national law, on equal terms with men, without any discrimination" (United Nations, 1952, Article. III).*

- ▶ [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women \(CEDAW\) \(1979\)](#) *"States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country" (United Nations, 1979, Article 7).*

- ▶ [Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, Belém do Pará Convention \(1994\)](#) *"Every woman has the right to the recognition, enjoyment, exercise and protection of all human rights and freedoms embodied in regional and international human rights instruments. These rights include, among others: (...) The right to have equal access to the public service of her country and to take part in the conduct of public affairs, including decision-making" (OAS, 1994, Article 4j).*

- ▶ [Miami Plan of Action of the First Summit of the Americas of the OAS \(1994\)](#) *"Strengthen policies and programs that improve and broaden the participation of women in all spheres of political, social, and economic life" (OAS, 1994, subsection 18 para. 1).*

- ▶ [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women \(1995\)](#) *"Commit to establishing the goal of gender balance in governmental bodies and committees, as well as in public administrative entities and the judiciary (...) to substantially increase the number of women to achieve equal representation of women and men, through positive action if necessary in all governmental and public administration positions" (United Nations, 1995, section 190 a).*

- ▶ [Plan of Action of Quebec. Third Summit of the Americas \(2001\)](#) *"They [States] will promote gender equity and equality and women's human rights"*

- ▶ [Inter-American Democratic Charter. Twenty-Eighth Special Session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States \(2001\)](#) *"States shall promote the full and equal participation of women in the political structures of their countries as a fundamental element in the promotion and exercise of a democratic culture" (OAS, 2001, Article 28).*

- ▶ [Quito Consensus. Tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean \(ECLAC 2007\)](#) *"Adopt positive action measures, and all mechanisms necessary, including legislative reforms and budget allocations to ensure the full participation of women in public positions and political representation in all branches of government, to consolidate parity (...)" (ECLAC, 2007, para. 1.ii).*

- ▶ [Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain, adopted by the Fifth Summit of the Americas of the OAS \(2009\)](#) *"(...) We will promote the full and equal participation of women in political life and decision-making structures in our countries, at all levels, through laws and public policies that promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms of the women, equality, equity and gender parity" (OAS, 2009, section 11).*

- ▶ [Brasilia Consensus. Eleventh Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean \(ECLAC, 2010\)](#) *"To increase and enhance opportunities for the equal participation of women in making and implementing policies in all spheres of public authority" (ECLAC, 2010, para. 3.a).*

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- ▶ [Declaration of Asuncion.](#) Twenty-First Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government (SEGIB 2011) *“Adopt the necessary measures to promote gender parity in all powers and levels of public service administration and increase and reinforce their full participation in public policy life cycles” (SEGIB, 2011, para. 25).*

 - ▶ [Santo Domingo Consensus.](#) Twelfth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (2013) *“Strengthen the participation of women on equal terms with men, adopting and applying laws that ensure equal representation in decision-making spaces, promoting affirmative measures of inclusion, both in political parties and in other institutions of democratic life, of the public or private sphere, and establishing mechanisms to punish non-compliance with the laws in this regard” (ECLAC, 2013, para. 102).*

 - ▶ [Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) of the Seventieth Session of the United Nations General Assembly (2015) *“Ensure the full and effective participation of women and equal opportunities for leadership at all decision-making levels in political, economic and public life” (United Nations, 2015, Sustainable Development Goal 5.5).*

 - ▶ [Montevideo Strategy.](#) Thirteenth Eleventh Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC 2016) *“Establish mechanisms that guarantee the equal diversity and inclusion of women in public power of popular election and appointment in all State functions and levels” (ECLAC, 2017, measure 3.b).*

 - ▶ [Lima Commitment](#) of the Eighth Summit of the Americas of the Organization of the American States (2018) *“Taking action such that follow-up measures stemming from the Lima Commitment promote the advancement of gender equity and equality and women’s empowerment in the Hemisphere” (OAS, 2018, agreement 55).*

 - ▶ [Declaration of Santo Domingo.](#) Thirty-Eighth Assembly of Delegates of the Inter-American Commission of Women (2019) *“Promote and strengthen women’s leadership in strategic decision-making spaces in State entities and levels of government considering that all public policies should consider the entire population’s perspective” (CIM/OAS, 2019, section 9).*

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- ▶ [Santiago Commitment.](#) Fourteenth Session of the Regional Conference Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC 2020) *“Encourage sustained efforts to increase the representation of women, including women with disabilities, in decision-making processes in order to achieve parity democracy, with an intercultural and ethnic-racial approach (...)” (ECLAC, 2020, para. 12).*

 - ▶ [Andorra Declaration](#) Twenty-seventh Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government (SEGIB 2021) *“Support multilateral efforts, the effectiveness of cooperation, and the impact of inter-institutional actions to promote women’s leadership and equal participation at all decision-making levels, particularly at the local level, to provide more inclusive, plural and representative answers in mitigating the crisis and achieving the SDGs” (SEGIB, 2021, para. 51).*

 - ▶ [Agreed conclusions of the Sixty-Fifth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women of the United Nations](#) (2021) *“Adopt measures to achieve the equal and meaningful participation of women and equal opportunities for leadership at all decision-making levels in political, economic, social and cultural life, and eliminate all structural barriers, including legal, institutional, economic, social and cultural barriers that prevent the participation of women and girls” (United Nations, 2021, para. 61, section e).*

WHY WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION



Another generation of women will have to wait for gender parity,

according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2021. Given the current trajectory and the differential impact of the COVID-19, it will take 135.6 years to close the global gender gap and 145.5 years to attain gender parity in politics⁴.

The underrepresentation of women in different areas of decision-making is one of the manifestations of historical and structural gender inequalities in the exercise of power. With a low presence of women in decision-making, issues such as development, the economy, justice, health, education, peace and security, as well as the response to climate change and multiple emergencies and crises, have been conceived from a perspective alien to the specific needs of women, thereby ignoring the assets of their contributions to societies and the disproportionate consequences and impacts these issues have on their lives and rights in all areas.

4 Global Gender Gap Report 2021.

The right to participate in decision-making on an equal footing

Under the principle of equality and non-discrimination, the respect and defense of political rights are State obligations in terms of human rights⁵, which entails guaranteeing women's full and effective political participation under conditions of equality and gender balance in public institutions⁶.

Likewise, as mentioned above, the region's governments have assumed international and regional commitments to equality and equal representation in decision-making. At the national level, some countries have recognized the principles of equality and parity in the exercise of political rights in their constitutional texts, as is the case of Ecuador⁷, Bolivia⁸, Colombia⁹, Mexico¹⁰ and Nicaragua¹¹, while others have done so through their regulatory frameworks.

5 The right to participate in public affairs is recognized in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and expanded in General Comment 25 on the Right to Participate in Public Affairs, Voting Rights and the Right to Equal Access to Public Service of the UN Committee on Human Rights. Articles 7 and 8 of the CEDAW also state that the States Parties must adopt measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and guarantee women the right to participate in different spheres. General Recommendation No. 23 on political and public life of the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (1997).

6 UN OHCHR, 2019.

7 [Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador \(Articles 61, 116, 176, 183, 210, 217, 434\).](#)

8 [Political Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia \(Articles 8, 14, 26\).](#)

9 [Constitución Política de Colombia \(art. 262\).](#)

10 [Political Constitution of the United Mexican States. Decree amending Articles 2, 4, 35, 41, 52, 53, 56, 94 and 115 in terms of Gender Parity](#)

11 [Political Constitution of the Republic of Nicaragua \(Articles 27, 48, 50\).](#)

12 UN Women, 2014.

13 CIM, 2020.

*In terms of representativeness and democratic justice, considering that women make up around 50% of the region's population, **they have the right to be equally represented in all State powers, and political and social parties and organizations at the national, subnational, and local levels**¹².*

Only through this participation is it possible to incorporate the perspective and differentiated realities of women in understanding both rights and the design and actions of public policy for development and governance¹³.

Women's Leadership Makes a Difference

Addressing women's leadership implies recognizing the contribution of diversity and the value of plurality in democratic governance. Decision-making spaces are enriched when the diversity of people and their different identities, experiences and contributions are recognized and included in participatory dialogues and reflected in the agendas¹⁴.

Likewise, it is essential to recognize that, although women's leadership is diverse and not all promote the same agenda, women experience multiple forms of gender-based discrimination and structural inequalities that affect their perspectives, interests, and proposals throughout their lives. Therefore, including their voices in debates and decision-making spaces is essential for advancing agendas that seek to transform centuries of power asymmetries¹⁵.

Evidence shows that women who hold political office dedicate more resources to social investment¹⁶, are concerned about social welfare and legal protection, and increase citizens' trust in government¹⁷. Furthermore, their participation in decision-making spaces positively impacts productivity¹⁸, innovation¹⁹ and response capacity, as noted by the international management of certain Heads of State or governments across the globe during the COVID-19 pandemic²⁰. Recent studies show that women in decision-making spaces perform well in their capacity to implement initiatives, resilience and the pursuit of results²¹. In addition, their presence in these spaces has an intergenerational impact, contributing to eradicating stereotypes and transforming the

models to follow in terms of leadership and the exercise of power²².

It is important to highlight the value of feminist and inclusive leadership, capable of contributing to or providing significant perspectives that identify women's specific needs and interests, in all their diversity, and placing them within different fields of incidence and actions²³. The incorporation of this perspective in public management and decision-making is essential to moving forward with the eradication of structural gender inequalities and the construction of more egalitarian societies.

Through activism and the opportunity to influence the construction of public policies from different leadership positions—both at a representative level in decision-making instances, as well as at a managerial, technical and social advocacy level—numerous women have contributed to ensuring the visibility of structural inequalities and historically forgotten issues²⁴ with their relevant contributions to the transformation of social and political agendas in recent decades²⁵. In this sense, it is important to recognize that the gradual increase in women's participation, and the strengthening of these persons as a critical mass in political

¹⁴ UN Women, 2021. Op. cit.

¹⁵ Lagarde, 1999. UN Women, op. cit. UCLG 2021.

¹⁶ IDB, 2014.

¹⁷ IPU, 2000.

¹⁸ ILO, 2017

¹⁹ Peluso, Heller Baird, Kesterson-Townes, 2019..

²⁰ UN Women, 2020.

²¹ Zenger and Folkman, 2019.

²² UN Women, 2020. Op. cit.

²³ Alonso y Langle de Paz, (Ed.), 2019.

²⁴ UN Women, op. cit.

²⁵ ECLAC, 2007. CIM, International IDEA, 2013.

representation through interparty networks and partnerships, have been key to advancing legislative agendas with a gender perspective.

Among others, it is worth noting the impetus women's leadership has given to the quota laws and the legislative reforms of the last 14 years by moving them towards parity in political representation systems. In addition, women's leadership has also been central to the approval and consolidation of comprehensive protection laws on gender-based violence against women, currently existing in 13 Latin American countries, the laws that typify the crime of femicide in 17 countries in Latin America, and the regulation of sex crimes, workplace harassment, specific laws on street harassment and the dissemination of intimate images by electronic media, as well as increased visibility and legislation on violence against women in political life. Women's leadership has also been key in raising awareness of the unfair social organization of care and the impact of the disproportionate burden of care faced by women, advocating for its recognition and redistribution based on the principle of co-responsibility. Progress towards public policies that guarantee the full exercise of sexual and reproductive rights—including comprehensive sex education, access to contraception and menstrual hygiene products, as well as the voluntary interruption of pregnancy—has been another key point on women's agendas in the region. This issue has gained increasing relevance in the women's and feminist movements of several countries in Latin America, widely recognized as the "green tide,"²⁶ and in certain States, their intervention has been reflected in legislation pertaining to the subject matter.

It is essential to recognize women's diverse leadership in these contributions, positioned as part of a historical process of struggles and substantial contributions to transforming legal frameworks and public policies to overcome gender inequalities and ensure that women can exercise their rights and enjoy autonomy.

²⁶ Casas, 2021. In the New York Times at: <https://www.gob.cl/institucion>

WOMEN IN DECISION MAKING



Women in decision-making

Information is based on data available for 2018 to 2022

WOMEN OCCUPY **34.6%** OF THE SEATS IN THE LOWER AND UPPER HOUSES OF THE AMERICAS³².

Eight countries have exceeded **40%** of women represented in their Lower Houses³³.

Six countries do not have **20%** of women represented in their Lower Houses³⁴.

Women preside ten Lower Houses in the region:

Bahamas, Belize, Colombia, Ecuador, United States, Guatemala, Jamaica, Peru, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago³⁵.

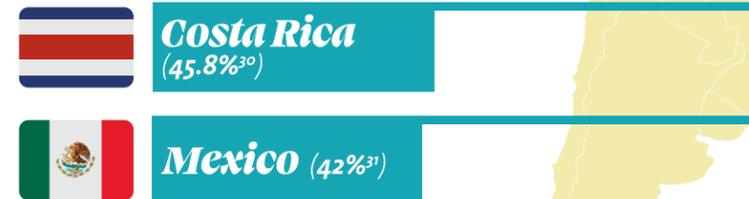
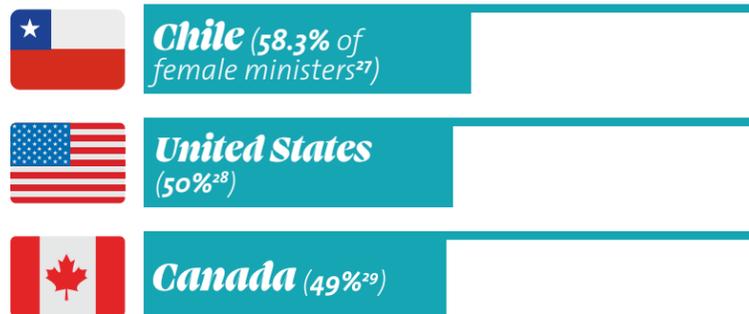
Only Bolivia and Antigua and Barbuda exceed **50%** representation of women in the legislative or deliberative bodies of local governments,

while five countries do not exceed **20%**³⁸.

Women hold **24.9%** of seats in local governments, on average, in Latin America and the Caribbean³⁷.

Women govern **only 15.5%** of municipal mayorships in Latin America³⁶.

Cabinets with parity



- 27 The Government of Chile [online] at: <https://www.gob.cl/instituciones/#ministeries>
- 28 The White House [online] at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/cabinet/>
- 29 Office of the Prime Minister [online] at: <https://pm.gc.ca/en/cabinet>
- 30 Office of the President of Costa Rica [online] at: <https://www.presidencia.go.cr/autoridades/el-gabinete/>
- 31 Office of the President of Mexico [online] at: <https://presidente.gob.mx/gabinete-3-2/>
- 32 World and regional averages of women in national parliaments | Parline: the IPU open data platform, information available as of May 1, 2022: <https://data.ipu.org/women-averages?month=3&year=2022>
- 33 Cuba (53.4%), Nicaragua (51.7%), México (50%), Costa Rica (47.4%), Granada (46.7%), Bolivia (46.2%), Argentina (44.8%), y Perú (40%). En <https://data.ipu.org/women-averages?month=3&year=2022>
- 34 Guatemala, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Bahamas, Paraguay, Brazil and Belize. At <https://data.ipu.org/women-averages?month=3&year=2022>
- 35 At Parline: the IPU open data platform, information available as of May 1, 2022 at <https://data.ipu.org/women-averages?month=3&year=2022>
- 36 ECLAC, Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean [online] Indicator: Elected women mayors, latest year available at <https://oig.cepal.org/es/indicadores/mujeres-alcaldesas-electas>
- 37 ECLAC, Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean [online] indicator: Proportion of seats held by women in local governments (SDG indicator 5.5.1.b): <https://oig.cepal.org/en/node/1915> <https://oig.cepal.org/es/indicadores/proporcion-escaños-ocupados-mujeres-gobiernos-locales-indicador-ods-551b-o>, also available at: <https://localgov.unwomen.org/>
- 38 ECLAC, Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean [online] indicator: Proportion of seats held by women in local governments (SDG indicator 5.5.1.b) at <https://oig.cepal.org/es/indicadores/proporcion-escaños-ocupados-mujeres-gobiernos-locales-indicador-ods-551b-o>

Female Heads of State and Government

In the last 30 years, only 14 women have been Heads of State and Government in Latin America and the Caribbean³⁹.

Formerly the region with the largest number of women Heads of State and Government in the world—with five women leaders governing at the same time in 2014—currently the only country that has a woman President in Latin America and the Caribbean is Honduras. Regarding parliamentary systems of government, Barbados has a woman Head of Government and Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago have women Heads of State. On the other hand, there has been a significant increase in women vice presidents in the region, from two vice presidents in 2015⁴⁰ to eight in May 2022⁴¹, which suggests progress in terms of the implementation of vertical parity formulas in uninominal positions, while also showcasing the glass ceiling that women face in leading the presidential binomial.

Women's Leadership During the Pandemic

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, women's leadership on the front line of the response gained greater recognition and appreciation. For example, in the health care sector, women make up more than half of all medical professionals and nine out of ten nursing professionals in Latin America and the Caribbean. They are often personnel with basic remuneration, minimal autonomy over flexibility at work and a greater risk of exposure to infections and contagions⁴². However, this crucial contribution to health care was offset by their limited participation in decision-making about the response to the pandemic⁴³. According to the [COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker](#), promoted by the UNDP and UN Women, women made up only 30% of the working groups and crisis committees created in the Americas to address both the health emergency and the crises in general⁴⁴.

39 Violeta Barrios de Chamorro (President of Nicaragua 1990-1997); Rosalía Arteaga (Interim President of Ecuador 1997); Janet Rosenberg Jagan (Prime Minister and President of Guyana 1997-1999); Mireya Moscoso (President of Panama 1999-2004); Michelle Bachelet (President of Chile 2006-2010, 2014-2018); Portia Simpson-Miller (Prime Minister of Jamaica 2006-2007, 2012-2016); Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (President of Argentina 2007-2015); Laura Chinchilla (President of Costa Rica 2010-2014); Dilma Rousseff (President of Brazil 2011-2016); Jeanine Áñez (Interim President of Bolivia 2019-2020); Paula-Mae Weekes (President of Trinidad and Tobago since 2018); Mia Mottley (Prime Minister of Barbados since 2018); Sandra Mason (President of Barbados since 2021); and Xiomara Castro (President of Honduras since January 2022).

40 Panama and the Dominican Republic

41 Argentina, Colombia, United States, Nicaragua, Peru, Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela.

42 IDB, 2019.

43 PAHO, 2021.

44 At <https://data.undp.org/gendertracker/>

Intersectionality in Political Participation

Women are not a homogeneous group; hence, there is a fundamental need to recognize the diversity and plurality present due to ethnic-racial origin, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, migratory status, territoriality (rural/urban), and socioeconomic level, among others. These conditions and factors can deepen inequalities and discrimination based on gender, which poses greater obstacles to women fully exercising their rights, including their political rights.

Although the advances in women's access to public and popularly elected positions are encouraging, they do not consistently reflect the diversity of the region: rural women, indigenous women, Afro-descendants, young women, women in situations of human mobility,

with disabilities, older women, and LGBTIQ+ women are still exceptional cases in positions of political representation. There is also a lack of statistical information to provide official data regarding women's political representation in their diversity. If the official data on political representation disaggregated by sex and ethnic-racial origin is almost non-existent, the information on young women, women with disabilities or LGBTIQ+ women, whose activism and social leadership have taken on an important role in the dialogues, is even scarcer at all levels. Not knowing how many participate in the candidacies and are elected prevents dimensioning the public policies that need to be deployed to improve their situation in the face of discrimination and inequality.

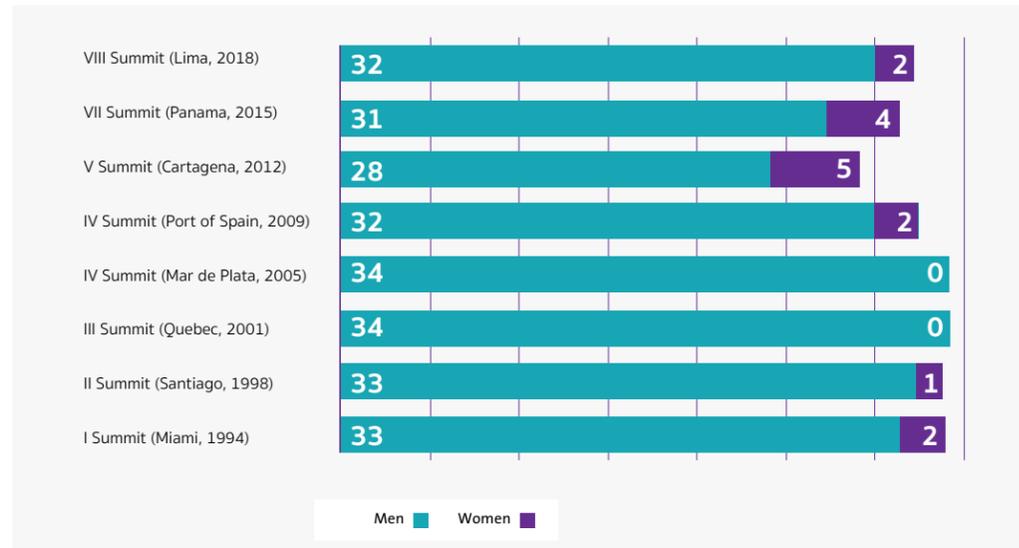
Representation of Women in the Ibero-American and American Summits

The Summits of the Americas constitute one of the spaces for multilateral dialogue between the Heads of State and governments of the hemisphere, presenting a strategic environment for political dialogue and cooperation toward a common regional agenda.

In the Summits held from 1994 to 2018, only 12 women have participated on behalf of their

States, ten as Heads of State, and two as Vice President and National Deputy. Five of these leaders have participated in more than one Summit. There were no women at the Summits held in 2001 and 2005, and the number of female leaders dropped between 2012 and 2018, as illustrated in the following graph:

Member States Representatives Attending the Summits of the Americas, by sex (1994 to 2018)



Prepared by the author based on information provided by the Summits of the Americas Secretariat, OAS.

Another key space for meeting and international diplomacy at the Ibero-American level is the Ibero-American Summits of Heads of State and Government, held since 1991. Women have barely represented 7% of the high authorities that have participated in the 27 conferences held, most as Presidents (60%),

Vice Presidents (15%) or Ministers, mainly of Foreign Affairs (12%)⁴⁵.

In the Summits of the Americas and the Ibero-American Summits of Heads of State and Government, the marginal presence of women is identified in the highest representation of governments.



Official photo of the Eighth Summit of the Americas

45 SEGIB, 2022.

***GUARANTEES
FOR THE
POLITICAL
PARTICIPATION
OF WOMEN
AND PARITY***



It is worth noting that the incorporation of measures aimed at reducing deficits in women's representation through the application of quotas or parity rules in the electoral systems of several countries in the region has contributed significantly to making progress towards representative balance in electoral system politics.

Currently, nine Latin American countries have a parity rule in their electoral legislation⁴⁶, and another nine have quota laws establishing between 20 and 40% of representation by sex in electoral candidacies⁴⁷.

In Mexico, the constitutional reform known as “Parity Everywhere” is notable in that it establishes a parity mandate for all positions in all three branches of government, in the autonomous entities, in the candidacies of the political parties to elected positions, and in the election of city council representatives in municipalities with indigenous populations⁴⁸. It is important to mention the lobbying and interparty political leadership processes carried

out by the Mexican women who participated in constructing said agenda and whose notable contributions helped overcome this milestone. In addition, and also thanks to the strength of the feminist movement and women in decision-making spaces, Chile approved a parity law for conventional constituent elections, thereby achieving the first parity Constituent Assembly in the world⁴⁹.

The concept of parity democracy, promoted by women from different regions, in particular, Latin American women leaders, and collected in the Regulatory Framework to Consolidate Parity Democracy of the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (2015), aims to install substantive equality and parity as the backbone of democratic governance. It transcends electoral parity and points to the consolidation of an inclusive State with action for equality and an institutional framework with parity representation in all branches and at all levels of government, including elective positions, appointments, and elected office⁵⁰.

46 Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico, Panama, and Peru. ECLAC, Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean [online] Quota and parity laws. At <https://oig.cepal.org/en/laws/quota-legislation>

47 Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Guyana, Haiti, Paraguay, Dominican Republic and Uruguay. ECLAC, Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean [online] Quota and parity laws. At : <https://oig.cepal.org/en/laws/quota-legislation>

48 [Political Constitution of the United Mexican States](#), Decree amending Articles 2, 4, 35, 41, 52, 53, 56, 94 and 115 in terms of Gender Parity.

49 At https://www.bcn.cl/procesoconstituyente/detalle_cronograma?id=f_publicacion-de-la-ley-21-216-paridad-de-genero-para-el-proceso-constituyente

50 Parlatino and UN Women, Regulatory Framework to Consolidate Parity Democracy, 2015

Quota and parity systems have gradually increased, and there are some promising initiatives that attempt to address this continuing challenge with affirmative action measures to reverse the underrepresentation of women mayors and achieve horizontal parity.

- In Mexico, the constitutional reform mentioned above establishes that, at the municipal level, parties must guarantee candidacy parity for the different elected positions, while the corresponding electoral authorities will guarantee the parity determined by law in the final integration of the city councils—president, councilors and receiverships⁵¹.
- In 2020, Ecuador approved reforms to its electoral law, including gender parity in the heading of lists for sub-national elections (provincial, municipal and parish), although it will be applied progressively: 30% in 2023 and 50% in the 2027 elections⁵².
- For its part, Costa Rica has emblematic jurisprudence for the Electoral Tribunal to interpret the Parity Law, which allows the concept and guarantees to be extended to horizontal parity in the heading of multi-member electoral lists, both for deliberative bodies of the municipalities and for the councils⁵³.
- Lastly, Peru established in 2020 that the candidacies for regional governorships and vice-governorships of political organizations must respect parity and alternation, and half of all constituencies must be headed by a woman or a man⁵⁴.



On the other hand, violence against women in political life is a major obstacle to their participation and empowerment. In this sense, we note the strategic impact of municipal women in Bolivia, who, through their complaints and advocacy, made visible the harassment and violence against women candidates and representatives at the local and national levels, which contributed to the approval of the first specific law in the region against harassment and political violence against women in 2012⁵⁵. This milestone was inspiring at a regional and global level, and 11 Latin American countries currently have some type of legal measure in place to address

51 [Political Constitution of the United Mexican States \(Art. 115\)](#).

52 Organic Electoral Law of Ecuador and Political Organizations (LOEOP), Democracy Code, Reform 2020.

53 Supreme Electoral Tribunal, 2019. Informal interpretation of Articles 2, 52 and 148 of the Electoral Code on the scope of the principle of parity in the heading of the lists of candidates for popularly elected municipal positions (horizontal parity). At <https://www.tse.go.cr/juris/electorales/1724-E8-2019.html>

54 Law Number 31.030: https://www.leyes.congreso.gob.pe/Documentos/2016_2021/ADLP/Normas_Legales/31030-LEY.pdf

55 ACOBOL, 2013. MESECVI, 2017.

this violence, either through specific laws or through its incorporation into other regulatory frameworks. The [Inter-American Model Law to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women in Political Life](#) has provided States with the necessary legal framework to ensure the right of women to a political life free from violence in accordance with the provisions of the Belém do Pará Convention that has served as grounds for most of the laws approved in the region.

Regarding women's political rights from the intersectional approach, countries such as Bolivia and Mexico have implemented mechanisms to guarantee the inclusion of indigenous women within the framework of the principles of parity established for electoral processes⁵⁷. In Mexico, affirmative actions were also ordered to ensure the integration of people of African descent, with disabilities, sexual diversity and migrants for the 2020-2021 electoral process⁵⁸. In Ecuador, since the reform of its Organic Electoral Law of 2020, the lists of candidates must guarantee a minimum quota of 25% for young people ages 18 to 29 and the horizontal parity mandate for sectional elections mentioned above⁵⁹. In regional and municipal elections, Peru established a quota of 20% for young people under age 29 and 15% for representatives of native peoples⁶⁰. Similarly, the Dominican Republic includes a 10% quota for young people up to age 35⁶¹, while Chile integrated a quota of 17 seats reserved for representatives of indigenous peoples and a 5% quota for people with disabilities in electing representatives to the Constituent Convention of 2021⁶².

*Countries in the region that have adopted legislation on violence against women in political life are **Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay**⁵⁶.*

56 Laws on political violence against women. In Political Reforms in Latin America at <https://reformaspoliticas.org/violencia-politica-contra-las-mujeres-2/>

57 UN Women, 2021. Op. cit

58 At https://www.dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5610455&fecha=27/01/2021

59 LOEOP, Reform 2020.

60 UNDP, UN Women and International IDEA, 2018.

61 International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 2021.

62 At <https://www.bcn.cl/leyfacil/recurso/cupos-para-pueblos-indigenas-en-la-convention-constitucional> and <https://www.bcn.cl/leyfacil/recurso/cupos-para-personas-con-discapacidad-en-las-listas-para-el-proceso-constituyente>.

***STRUCTURAL
BARRIERS TO
WOMEN'S
LEADERSHIP⁶³***



6.1. Concentration of Power and Restrictions on the Political Participation of Women

Since political parties are the main mechanism through which representatives are elected for political decision-making spaces, and given the relevance of their functions in constructing government agendas and governance foundations, they play an essential role to achieving women's political rights⁶⁴. However, the structures and operations of political parties and organizations continue to be influenced by resistant organizational cultures and ideological values that hinder women's access to positions of power and decision-making⁶⁵.

Despite the existence of affirmative action mechanisms in eighteen countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, not all electoral designs with a gender perspective have generated the same effects, due to their different designs and levels of demand, as well as the resistance or formal compliance with these measures by political parties and organizations that often understand quotas as a ceiling and not as a minimum⁶⁶. In the face of strategies adopted by the parties to formally comply with the legal quota requirements, such as the placement of women in "losing districts"⁶⁷ or as substitutes, and/or obligating elected women to resign so the positions can be assumed by male alternates after the elections⁶⁸, the leadership of women has been key to demanding the establishment of position mandates and guaranteeing that they are used in the complete formulas (incumbent and alternate), applying sanctions for non-compliance (including loss of registration) and eradicating all kinds of exceptions and escape valves⁶⁹.

Although the evidence shows—where data is available—that women make up between 40% and 60% of militants⁷⁰, the organizations that have achieved parity in the composition of their national executive bodies are highly exceptional, with national averages of women in executive positions ranging from 17.3% to 33.3%, which reveals their underrepresentation in decision-making and constitutes a determining factor in the definition of electoral candidates⁷¹. This, despite the fact that some countries, such as Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras and Panama, have adopted quota and parity systems for party leadership position elections.⁷²

⁶³ This section includes concepts and agenda items recognized by the States through different agreements, such as the structural centers of gender inequality recognized in the Montevideo Strategy (XII Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2016) and other specific barriers to the political participation of women included in both the Declaration of Santo Domingo of the Thirty-Eighth Assembly of Delegates of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM/OAS), the Declaration on political violence and harassment against women (MESECVI/OAS), Agreed Conclusions of the Sixty-Fifth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65), and contributions from various multilateral dialogues promoted by the institutions comprising the Task Force.

⁶⁴ International IDEA, 2016.

⁶⁵ International IDEA, 2021.

⁶⁶ UN Women, 2018. Ob. cit.

⁶⁷ Freidenberg y Caminotti, 2018.

⁶⁸ Rojas Valverde, 2012. CIM and IDEA Internacional, 2013.

⁶⁹ Freidenberg y Lajas García, 2017.

⁷⁰ UN Women, 2021.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

The barriers to women's leadership within political parties and organizations are also reflected in inequalities related to electoral campaign financing, visibility in party communications, the definition of candidacies, and the low investments in training programs directed to strengthen women's leadership as a tool to promote competitive female candidates. Along with these barriers, there is the normalization of violence against women in political life⁷³, a topic to be discussed in depth in the following sections.

There are also unequal power relations and practices in public administrations, implicit discrimination, and the normalization of gender biases and roles⁷⁴, which imply conditions for professional development and obstacles to women's leadership in the public sector.

6.2. Patriarchal Cultural Patterns: Gender Stereotypes and Biases

Gender roles, stereotypes and biases, as well as structural inequalities, power relations and socialization processes, have privileged male leadership styles, influencing the social perception of those who can be part of political power, the attributes they need to lead, and even marking a division of gender roles that constitutes a cultural barrier for women's access to public life⁷⁵.

Even when women have demonstrated their capacities for leadership, the persistence of gender stereotypes and biases, as well as discrimination and violence against them, continues to condition and hinder their opportunities and full development.

⁷³ UNDP, UN Women, IDEA Internacional, 2020.

⁷⁴ Tello Sánchez, 2020.

⁷⁵ García Beaudoux, 2017 (b).

In the analysis of biases, it is also important to recognize how these interact with different intersectionalities, since indigenous women, young women, women with disabilities and women with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, among other characteristics, are usually the object of stereotypes and additional gender biases that limit their full potential in their professional and political performance.

The historical sexual division of labor has given rise to social constructions that have extended the borders of gender roles and stereotypes to the public sphere. Consequently, women's positions in public administration and political management tend to be mostly associated with gender-based biases, with their greatest presence in sectors related to health, education, family, and culture, and significantly lower in other areas such as the economy, foreign relations, labor, infrastructure, science and technology⁷⁶.

This social construct of attributes and roles associated with men and women is learned and internalized by people based on experiences and messages throughout life and is normalized through structures, culture, and interactions⁷⁷. In this sense, education, public and private communication, the social norms that establish power relations, organizational culture, and the symbolic mandates of institutions play a fundamental role in the permanence or eradication of stereotypes and biases against

women.

Media are key players in this regard since they can determine the perspective to handle the information they share and how they represent women. As shown by various investigations, media outlets and social media platforms are spaces in which discrimination and violence against women politicians are more frequently perpetrated⁷⁸. Based on a sample of media texts related to the electoral processes that took place in Mexico in 2015 and 2016, it was found that of the total mentions of candidates for popular election positions, only 19.3% were references to women, and the rest were men⁷⁹. More recently, the monitoring of media coverage in the 2021 primary elections in Argentina found that women had only 29% of the speaking time that the candidates had in the media in their various modalities (live interviews, recorded interviews, press conferences, recorded video, cited or referenced), compared to 71% occupied by men. The same report noted that although several political parties included LGBTQ+ candidates in their lists, they were ignored in the news coverage⁸⁰.

Sexism and stereotypes in societies' social and political cultures reinforce hegemonic frameworks in which where women are not included.

6.3. The Continuum of Violence against Women in Political and Public Life

Violence against women transcends the borders of all things private. It is reflected in a continuum of violence that is manifested in areas and subjects of work, health care, educational spaces, communications, and political and public life⁸¹. When women participate in the public sphere, they are often perceived as transgressing the status quo, while resistance is mobilized to preserve male privileges⁸². Different methods have been used to attempt to inhibit the incorporation of women into spaces of power and decision-making, with violence in political life being a reaction to their gradual access to spheres of power and one of the manners in which their political rights are affected.

Violence against women in politics violates human rights and restricts women's participation in political and public life, with intergenerational impacts⁸³.

The manifestations of violence against women in their political life, sometimes imperceptible and naturalized, other times more clear and visible, are expressed through physical, sexual, psychological, moral, economic, symbolic or digital violence. Humiliation and/or sexualized jokes, insults, ridicule of their appearance, comments about their private lives, disqualification of their image, and isolation force them to resign once elected or when the list has already been registered, exclude them or constantly interrupt them in legislative debates and/or in other areas of debate and decision-making, prevent them from voting, deny them sufficient budget allocations for their electoral campaigns and/or information for the proper exercise of their position, cut off their access to the media; exclude them from key decision-making meetings and/or distort the concept of "alternating" as a shared exercise of the position. Even sexist threats, kidnappings and femicides constitute some of the manifestations of violence women face in exercising their political rights⁸⁴.

The municipal political sphere supposes an even more hostile scenario to female leadership, with specific characteristics in rural, indigenous and Afro-descendant communities⁸⁵, since the practices of violence are, in some cases, normalized by social mandates that can inhibit the political vocation of community leaders.

81 Cockburn, 2004.

82 UNDP, UN Women, IDEA Internacional, 2020. Op. cit Krook, 2017

83 Declaration on political violence and harassment against women, 2015. United Nations, 2021.

84 United Nations, 2021. Op. cit

85 Tello Sánchez, 2013; Torres García, 2017; Torres, 2018. Serrano Oswald, 2021 p. 295.

76 UNDP, 2014. Women in politics 2021. UN Women, Inter-Parliamentary Union.

77 UNDP, 2020.

78 UN Women, 2021 (c).

79 INE, FEPADE, Tribunal Electoral and FLACSO Mexico, 2017

80 Secretariat of Women, Diversity and Gender, INADI, ENACOM, Office of the Public Defender, 2022.

At the same time, political violence intersects with another phenomenon of these times: the consolidation of social media as a public space. In the virtual space, digital and social media outlets reproduce gender stereotypes that hinder the participation of women in public and political life while identifying increased attacks on women who use these spaces to exercise their political citizenship freedoms. This area would currently constitute, together with political parties, the main space where violence against women in politics is manifested⁸⁶. Online violence against women based on gender is manifested through discriminatory expressions, insults loaded with sexist stereotypes, contempt for abilities, phrases alluding to gender roles and mandates, offensive jokes, sexist content, justification of violence, the spread of rumors and false news, publication of denigrating messages, references to the body and sexuality of women, including the nonconsensual disclosure of photos with intimate sexual content and sextortion, discrediting, harassment and threats. In addition, there is evidence that shows that online violence affects different dimensions of women's lives; they have reported panic attacks, stress or anxiety, loss of self-esteem or confidence, fear of going out, periods of psychological isolation, and other consequences⁸⁷. For women with high public profiles, the regularity with which they suffer cyberbullying or cyber violence is one of the reasons why many decide to close their accounts or abandon their political careers⁸⁸.

Various initiatives have been promoted in the region seeking to stop violence against women in political life, from its criminalization to the creation of protocols within the framework of political parties and national parliaments, inter-institutional action protocols, observato-

ries for monitoring cases, as well as awareness initiatives, such as the campaign *We are Half, We want Parity without Harassment* in Peru, the *Call #StopPoliticalViolenceAgainstWomen* in Mexico, the *Campaign for the Permanence of Women in Their Positions, without Harassment or Political Violence* in Bolivia, and the *#ItIsNotTheCost*⁸⁹, global campaign, with chapters in the region in countries such as Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico⁹⁰.

6.4. Sexual Division of Labor and Unfair Social Organization of Care

Care work is essential for the sustenance of life and the reproduction of the labor force and societies. It generates a fundamental contribution to economic production, development and well-being⁹¹. However, since it is carried out disproportionately by women, it is also one of the main obstacles to the full enjoyment of rights and opportunities for women under equal conditions.

Despite their growing participation in the labor force, women are still mainly responsible for the care and household tasks, which gives rise to an overload of work, with double and even triple workdays. There is a dichotomy

between greater participation of women and men in the public sphere, which does not translate in the same way into a greater co-responsibility of care in the domestic sphere, where male participation in care tasks continues to be notably lower in most homes⁹².

*The data shows that in Latin America and the Caribbean, women spend three times the amount of time that men spend on unpaid care and domestic work every day*⁹³.

Before the COVID-19 crisis, women devoted between 22 and 42 hours a week to domestic work and care activities, with lower-income women dedicating up to 46 hours a week on average to these tasks. This means that the difference in hours spent on unpaid work between men and women remains very wide. The time women spend on unpaid domestic and care work constitutes almost 50% of the time spent working (both paid and unpaid).⁹⁴

In addition to the economic recession that led to a reduction in employment, caregiving during the pandemic led to an increase in the burden of unpaid care and domestic work and to a forceful exit of women from the labor market, which, in 2020, represented a setback of 18 years in terms of labor participation⁹⁵ and many women made the decision to postpone their ventures and projects in the political sphere. As of the third quarter of 2021, one in two women were still out of the labor market, reaching the same levels as in 2016⁹⁶.

Although some countries in the region have adopted measures to comply with the commitment to the right to care from a gender perspective, the "global emergency of care"⁹⁷ after the COVID-19 pandemic has evidenced that the efforts made are insufficient and that it is not sustainable for women to continue assuming unpaid care work almost exclusively.

Women have managed to overcome many structural gender barriers and are increasingly joining spaces that previously restricted their participation, such as the labor market, political sphere, and judicial sector. However, it is necessary to break with the traditional sexual division of labor. Just as women have managed

86 UNDP, UN Women, IDEA Internacional, 2020. Op. cit UN Women, 2021c. Op. cit.

87 CIM/MESECVI and UN Women, 2022.

88 UNDP, UN Women, IDEA Internacional, 2020. Op. cit UN Women, 2021c. Op. .

89 In 2016, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) launched the #NotTheCost campaign to stop violence against women in politics, declaring that violence should not be the cost of women's political participation. At <https://www.ndi.org/not-the-cost>

90 UNDP, UN Women, IDEA Internacional, 2020. Ob. cit

91 UN Women and ECLAC, 2020

92 ECLAC, Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean [online]. Proportion of time dedicated to unpaid domestic and care work, disaggregated by sex at <https://oig.cepal.org/es/indicadores/proporcion-tiempo-dedicado-al-trabajo-domestico-cuidado-no-remunerado-desglosado-sexo-o>

93 Ibid

94 ECLAC, 2020.

95 ECLAC, 2022 (a).

96 Ibid.

97 CIM/OAS, Social EURO, 2020

to enter and conquer spaces of responsibility in the public sphere, it is imperative to ensure that care is assumed as a social co-responsibility, where all actors of society, the State (at the national, subnational, and local levels), the private sector, the community and families, men and women take charge of caring for society⁹⁸.

6.5. Socioeconomic Inequality

Economic autonomy is crucial to empowering women in other spheres, such as politics. However, the gaps in economic inequality persist and have worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, 27.8% of women in Latin America and the Caribbean, ages 15 and more, received no monetary income, while 12% of men did not⁹⁹. Gender gaps are also relevant in labor force participation and the employment rate. As a consequence of the pandemic, more than 49 million jobs were destroyed, and of the 4.5 million that remain to be recovered, 4.2 million belonged to women¹⁰⁰. These gaps place the region among the most unequal globally, only after the Middle East, North Africa, and Southeast Asia. Similarly, labor gender gaps

within the region are heterogeneous, with the greatest division seen in Central America¹⁰¹.

Together with the lack of economic autonomy and poverty, salary gaps and unpaid care work escalate the conditions of economic inequality that are also reflected in the limited opportunities for participation in spaces of power and decision-making. Women who do not have the financial means to cover care work hardly have time to participate in politics. This condition is aggravated among indigenous and rural women, who also tend to do unpaid farm work.

The financial gap is another obstacle to economic autonomy and women's empowerment. Information from 2018 shows that in Latin America and the Caribbean, only 49% of women have a bank account, 11% save, and 10% have credit; on the other hand, these values for men represent 54%, 16% and 13% respectively¹⁰². In many cases, women also face barriers to accessing credit, linked to direct or indirect discrimination by financial institutions¹⁰³.

When women participate in politics, they face barriers to financing their electoral campaigns, which hinders their chances of winning the elections.

Women have more difficulties than men in accessing public resources, financing networks,

and less time for fundraising activities for their electoral campaigns, adding to the inexistence of alternative forms of institutional support that help women pay for a campaign while facing the economic responsibility of domestic and care work. In addition, there is still limited legislation and party regulations that promote allocating certain percentages of resources to women's training and campaigns¹⁰⁴.

Regarding the digital divide, between 60% and 85% of households are disconnected in 11 countries in the region. In contrast, in the countries with the highest connection rates, this percentage is close to 30%¹⁰⁵. Four out of ten women are not connected in the region and cannot afford connectivity, hindering their economic autonomy¹⁰⁶. In the same sense, in rural and low-income areas, disadvantages are observed for women in terms of access and ownership, affordability, and skill in using ICTs¹⁰⁷. This is a situation that hinders women's leadership in times when social and political involvement is nurtured and stimulated based on the optimization of social media.

98 UN WOMEN and ECLAC, 2021

99 ECLAC, 2020. At <https://oig.cepal.org/es/indicadores/poblacion-sin-ingresos-propios-sexo>

100 ILO, 2021.

101 Aguirre, Arvay, Auricchio, Berniell, de la Mata, Fainstain, Palacios, 2022.

102 CAF, 2018.

103 Aguirre, Arvay, Auricchio, Berniell, de la Mata, Fainstain, Palacios, 2022. Op. cit.

104 Freidenberg y Muñoz-Pogossian, 2018.

105 ECLAC, 2021 (a).

106 ECLAC, 2021 (d).

107 Aguirre, Arvay, Auricchio, Berniell, de la Mata, Fainstain, Palacios, 2022. Op. cit.

6.6. Threats to the Full and Effective Participation and Decision-making of Women in Public Life

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of conservative and discriminatory practices and discourses that constitute threats and possible setbacks regarding the guarantee of the rights of all people, gender equality, and women's autonomy.

Despite the progress made to fully realize women's right to participate in public life, direct attacks on civil servants and public officials who defend women's rights and sexual and gender diversity have been identified and even reached institutional disqualifications against the National Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women (NMAW). Many defenders of women's human rights, women's organizations and feminist groups have been the target of attacks¹⁰⁸, while indigenous and Afro-descendant women defenders are often subject to double discrimination as women and for their ethnic-racial origin¹⁰⁹. Likewise, national and regional women's organizations that work in areas of armed conflict or generalized violence are often subjected to harassment and threats by armed actors who see their leadership as an obstacle to social control of the territories they occupy¹¹⁰.

On the other hand, proposals for the regression of rights are identified, especially in the context of electoral processes and the design and implementation of public policy processes¹¹¹. In this sense, the Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism of the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI) pointed out in 2017 in its Declaration on Gender Equality and Women's

¹⁰⁸ Report of the Secretary General of the United Nations for CSW65 (E/CN.6/2021/3, p. 14).

¹⁰⁹ Second report on the situation of human rights defenders in the Americas. IACHR, 2011.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ CIM, 2017. UN Women, 2021. Op. cit.

Empowerment for the Good of Humanity, "That the speeches and campaigns that defend the patriarchal social, political and economic order disparagingly as a natural order refer to the analytical category of "gender" as an ideology and hinder substantive equality, since they deepen chauvinism (machismo) and misogyny, reinforce and perpetuate stereotypes and discriminatory gender roles and a culture of intolerance, which affects democratic coexistence, hinders the exercise of women's rights and legitimizes violence against them."¹¹².

Likewise, the Secretary-General of the United Nations stated in his report for the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65) that "Counteracting the social norms that endanger the rights of women and their participation in public life, it is necessary to raise awareness and sensitize the community and religious leaders, the media, men and boys and different generations of women, so that the rules can be adjusted deliberately, for example, to prevent sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices."¹¹³. Also, in her 2017 report to the Human Rights Council the United Nations Special Rapporteur on cultural rights establishes that "Governments must ensure that there is a counterweight to fundamentalist and extremist discourses by publicly challenging them" and guaranteeing education in accordance with international standards¹¹⁴.

¹¹² MESECVI/OAS, 2017.

¹¹³ Report of the Secretary General of the United Nations for CSW65, 2021.

¹¹⁴ Report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights, 2017.

*A CALL TO
ACTION TO
ACCELERATE
EFFORTS*



The Americas region shows slow progress in the political representation of women. In order to achieve political parity and compliance with SDG 5.5, it is necessary to accelerate efforts, actions and policies towards substantive equality and commit the necessary resources and financing.

Consequently, and even acknowledging the positive impact that the adoption of quotas or electoral parity has had in some countries, a comprehensive approach is needed to ensure equal access for women and men to all State institutions and political organizations, as well as conditions and guarantees for the full exercise of women's rights free from discrimination and gender-based violence¹¹⁵. The first implies overcoming structural inequalities—social, cultural, economic, etc.—that hinder access to decision-making spaces by women and historically excluded groups. The second requires protecting and guaranteeing the full exercise of women's political rights.

Women's full and effective participation in decision-making is fundamental to ensuring that the public agenda—and public policies—incorporate new dimensions and perspectives to modify the structural factors that exclude them and close the cycle of gender-based discrimination and inequality¹¹⁶. In similar manner, this participation is essential to effectively respond to current challenges such as the crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic and the various crises the region faces¹¹⁷. No crisis will be overcome without women. Their leadership and contributions are essential for an inclusive, equitable and sustainable response and recovery.

The institutions that make up the Inter-American Task Force on Women's Leadership have an opportunity to contribute to the dialogue surrounding the Ninth Summit of the Americas about the challenges to democratic governance in the region and women's participation and to share the concern expressed by the Commission on the Status of Women at its 65th session held in 2021 regarding “the persistence of structural barriers that aggra-

vate existing obstacles to women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life and the elimination of violence,” noting that “the current pace of progress is too slow, and that accelerating progress is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030”¹¹⁸. Thus, the proposal is made to accelerate efforts in the implementation of international and regional commitments already assumed by the governments of the region, in particular:

1. TO MOVE TOWARDS PARITY DEMOCRACY:

- “Redouble efforts and commitment to make gender parity a State policy and ensure equal access for women to decision-making positions in all branches and powers of the State, including the judiciary, and in national, subnational and local governments, through initiatives and legislative and electoral measures that guarantee equal representation of women in all areas and levels of political power (...)” (NMAW Declaration for CSW65, 2021 para. 2)¹¹⁹.

2. IN ORDER TO GUARANTEE THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN, IN ALL THEIR DIVERSITY, IN ALL DECISION-MAKING SPACES:

- “Adopt all necessary measures, including changes at the legislative level and affirmative policies, to ensure parity, inclusion, and ethnic and racial alternation in all State powers, in special and autonomous regimes, at the local, national and international levels and in private institutions, in order to strengthen the democracies of Latin America and the Caribbean, with an ethnic-racial perspective” (Brasilia Consensus, 2010 para. 3b)¹²⁰.
- “Support the leadership of women in social and political organizations, promoting equal democratic participation, institutional strengthening and advocacy capacities of civil society organizations, women's and feminist movements, and in particular the leadership of adolescent and young girls, indigenous people, Afro-descendants, rural women, migrant women, women living with HIV/AIDS, women with disabilities and LGBTI people, respecting their organizational expressions” (Montevideo Strategy, 2016 measure 3a)¹²¹.

¹¹⁵ Declaration on political violence and harassment against women, 2015.

¹¹⁶ Regulatory Framework to consolidate Parity Democracy. Op. cit

¹¹⁷ Call on States to ensure equal participation of women in decision-making throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

¹¹⁸ CSW65 agreed conclusions.

¹¹⁹ Declaration of the Ministers and High Authorities of the National Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean for the CSW65, 60th MDG, RCM, 2021 at: https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/events/files/21-00100_mdm.60_declaracion_lac_csw65.pdf

¹²⁰ Brasilia Consensus, 2010. Eleventh Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) at: https://www.cepal.org/notas/66/documentos/ConsensoBrasilia_ESP.pdf

¹²¹ Montevideo Strategy for the implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda in the framework of sustainable development by 2030, 2016. Thirteenth ECLAC Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean at: https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/41011/1/S1700035_es.pdf

3. IN ORDER TO ERADICATE GENDER ROLES, STEREOTYPES AND BIASES THAT INFLUENCE AND DEEPEN STRUCTURAL GENDER INEQUALITIES AND LIMIT THE POSSIBILITIES FOR WOMEN TO EXERCISE THEIR LEADERSHIP FULLY:

- "States Parties shall take appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, to achieve the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or stereotyped roles for men and women" (CEDAW, 1979 Article 5 a)¹²².

4. IN ORDER TO GUARANTEE A PUBLIC AND POLITICAL LIFE FREE OF VIOLENCE FOR WOMEN:

- "Encourage sustained efforts to guarantee, from an intersectional approach, the protection of the human rights of women who participate in political and public life, human rights defenders and women journalists and condemn political violence against women, including the one exercised against them when they access decision-making spaces and the one that manifests itself in the field of information and communication technologies and social media" (NMAW Declaration for CSW65, 2021 para. 11)¹²³.
- "Promote regulatory reforms and mechanisms to prevent, punish and deal with violence against women in political life, using a reference when considered relevant, the Inter-American Model Law to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women in Political Life, of the Follow-up Mechanism of the Belém do Pará Convention (Declaration of Santo Domingo of the Thirty-Eighth Assembly of the Delegates of the CIM, 2019 para. 6)¹²⁴.
- "Promote the design of public policy in matters related to political violence and harassment against women to facilitate substantive equality, the strengthening of their leadership and their permanence in deci-

sion-making spaces and ensure that they are applied at the national and sub-national levels" (Declaration of the Sixth Conference of States Parties to the Belém do Pará Convention, 2015 p.10)¹²⁵.

5. ABOUT THE ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND ORGANIZATIONS IN THE ADVANCEMENT OF GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN:

- "Highlight the importance of developing and consolidating initiatives, regulations and inclusive electoral policies of a permanent nature that lead organizations and political parties to incorporate, in a transversal manner, the agendas of women in all their diversity and the perspectives of gender and human rights, especially concerning their content, financing, actions and statutes, and the importance of ensuring equal participation, empowerment, autonomy and leadership of women and urging the development of internal action protocols to prevent, address, punish and eradicate violence against women in political life" (NMAW Declaration for CSW65, 2021 para. 8)¹²⁶
- To this end, consider the recommendations of the Model Protocol for Political Parties.

"Preventing, Addressing, Punishing and Eradicating Violence against Women in Political Life" (OAS/Ser.L/II.6.22, 2019)¹²⁷.

6. TO GUARANTEE THE CONDITIONS FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY, IN PARTICULAR WOMEN'S AND FEMINIST ORGANIZATIONS, AS KEY ACTORS IN STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY:

- "Promote measures, including budgetary measures, to enable human rights defenders, especially political rights defenders, and feminist and women's organizations to receive the support and protection of State institutions, including ensuring their participation in the drafting processes of public policies and access to justice" (Declaration of Panama of the Thirty-Ninth Assembly of the Delegates of the CIM, 2022)¹²⁸.
- Consider the recommendations of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to the American States to "Adopt the corresponding measures to legally recognize the right to defend human rights and disseminate their content in the governmental, educational and social sectors" (IACHR, 2011, p. 239)¹²⁹.

¹²² Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. UN, 1979: <https://www.ohchr.org/es/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>

¹²³ Declaration of the Ministers and High Authorities of the National Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean for the CSW65. Op. cit.

¹²⁴ Declaration of Santo Domingo on equality and autonomy in the exercise of political rights of women for the strengthening of democracy, 2019. Thirty-Eighth Assembly of CIM Delegates at : <https://www.oas.org/es/cim/docs/DeclaracionSANTODOMINGO-ES.pdf>

¹²⁵ Declaration on political violence and harassment against women of the Sixth Conference of States Parties to the Belém do Pará Convention. Op. cit

¹²⁶ Declaration of the Ministers and High Authorities of the National Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean for the CSW65, 60th MDM, RCM, 2021, Para. 8. Op. cit

¹²⁷ Model Protocol for Political Parties. Preventing, Addressing, Punishing and Eradicating Violence against Women in Political Life: <https://www.oas.org/es/cim/docs/ViolenciaPolitica-ProtocoloPartidos-ES.pdf>

¹²⁸ Declaration of Panama "Building bridges for a new social and economic pact led by women," 2022. Thirty-Ninth Assembly of the Delegates of the CIM at <https://www.oas.org/es/cim/docs/DeclaracionPANAMA-ES.pdf>

¹²⁹ Second report on the situation of human rights defenders in the Americas. IACHR, 2011..

7. TO MOVE TOWARDS A CARING SOCIETY THAT ENABLES THE FULL EXERCISE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS AND THEIR LEADERSHIP IN ALL AREAS:

- “(...) promote comprehensive care systems, from the perspectives of gender, human rights, intersectionality and interculturality, that promote co-responsibility between women and men and between the State, the market, families and the community, and that include policies including matters related to time, resources, benefits and universal and quality public services to meet the different care needs of the population, as part of social protection systems” (NMAW Declaration for CSW65, 2021 para. 5)¹³⁰.
- “Promote the adoption of regulatory frameworks, legislation, and public policy aimed at addressing care with social co-responsibility, using as a reference, among other instruments, the Inter-American Model Law on Care¹³¹, so women can actively and productively participate in all areas and subjects of work” (Declaration of Panama, adopted at the Thirty-ninth Assembly of the Delegates of the CIM, 2022)¹³².

8. TO MONITOR PROGRESS IN TERMS OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND THEIR FULL LEADERSHIP IN ALL AREAS:

- “Strengthen the effective implementation of statistical information production systems with disaggregated data that permit analysis with a gender perspective and intersectional approach, to design public policies for gender equality and measure compliance with the commitments assumed by States to achieve parity” (NMAW Declaration for CSW65, 2021 para. 7)¹³³.
- “Promote and disseminate research that considers the nature and specificities of political violence and harassment against women, and produce statistical data on the subject matter to ensure access to accurate and updated information that permits the adoption of standards, programs and measures, including specialized care for victims” (Declaration of the Sixth Conference of States Parties to the Belém do Pará Convention, 2015, para. 3)¹³⁴.

¹³⁰ Declaration of the Ministers and High Authorities of the National Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean for the CSW65. Op. cit

¹³¹ Inter-American Model Law on Care at <https://www.oas.org/es/cim/docs/LeyModeloCuidados-ES.pdf>

¹³² Declaration of Panama of the Thirty-Ninth Assembly of the Delegates of the CIM, 2022. Op. cit

¹³³ Declaration of the Ministers and High Authorities of the National Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean for the CSW65. Op. cit.

¹³⁴ Declaration on political violence and harassment against women of the Sixth Conference of States Parties to the Belém do Pará Convention. Op. cit

9. TO STRENGTHEN COOPERATION FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC LIFE:

- “Encourage political dialogue between States, promote the exchange of good legislative practices and other policies on gender parity in politics, and disseminate other measures to ensure the full and effective participation of women in all spheres of politics in accordance with their respective internal legal systems” (Declaration of Santo Domingo of the Thirty-Eighth Assembly of the Delegates of the CIM, 2019 para. 3)¹³⁵.
- “(...) invite all States to increase South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation focusing on common development priorities, with the participation of all relevant government agencies, civil society and the private sector, while also observing that national ownership and leadership in this regard are essential to achieving gender equality and women and girls' empowerment and improving their lives and well-being” (United Nations, 2021, para. 61, section jj)¹³⁶.

¹³⁵ Declaration of Santo Domingo on equality and autonomy in the exercise of political rights of women for the strengthening of democracy, 2019. Op. cit

¹³⁶ CSW65 Agreed Conclusions at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/079/07/PDF/N2107907.pdf?OpenElement>

¹³⁷ Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Strategic Objective G.1., 192.1.

10. EMPHASIZING THE OBJECTIVE OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION TO ACHIEVE “(...) BALANCE BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN IN THE COMPOSITION OF DELEGATIONS TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL FORUMS”¹³⁷:

The call is made to guarantee the full and effective participation of women in multilateral decision-making processes, especially in those that emerge as lines of work and commitment from the Ninth Summit of the Americas.

IN CLOSING



In the context of the dialogues on public policies that will take place at the regional level during and after the Ninth Summit of the Americas, the participation and leadership of women are key to furthering democratic governance. The voices of women must be heard and their contributions valued in dialogues and decision-making on: health and resilience in the region, the challenges and proposals for a green future, the transition to clean energy, digital transformation, economic recovery, peace, security and multiple challenges, especially in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. An inclusive, fair and sustainable response is only possible if women are fully included in decision-making.

The Ninth Summit of the Americas represents a key opportunity to renew the commitments and obligations of the States towards the necessary strengthening of parity democracy and the achievement of substantive equality. The recommendations referred to above are intended to guide the response to the fundamental challenges and the actions they imply and, in summary, aim to:

- Move towards parity democracy,
- Increase investment to strengthen women's political leadership,
- Implement urgent measures to eradicate violence against women in political and public life,
- Move towards comprehensive care systems,
- Create and strengthen citizen participation mechanisms for women in their diversity
- Expand and improve the generation of gender statistics with an intersectional approach, and
- Promote social, cultural and fiscal pacts that guarantee progress towards substantive gender equality.

Accelerating the pace to achieve women's full and effective participation in positions of power and decision-making is an urgent issue. The girls, adolescents and women of today have the right to a present and future in equality in which they can develop their full potential and fully participate in decision-making.

The horizon is that more women reach the maximum representation of the Member States in the upcoming Summits and that we can celebrate more progress on their participation in all spaces and levels of power and decision-making in the region in order to achieve the sustainable, resilient, and equitable future proposed as a goal of the Ninth Summit of the Americas.

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