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**REPORT OF THE EIGHTH MEETING OF SPECIALIZED AGENCIES
AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM
ON THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

(Santiago, Chile, 9-10 November 1999)

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Mandate

1. The eighth meeting of Specialized Agencies and Other Bodies of the United Nations system on the Advancement of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean was convened by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in compliance with the provisions of the Regional Plan of Action adopted at the first session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America, in Havana, Cuba, in 1977 and with the request made by the Deputy Secretary-General at the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Meeting for the Latin American and Caribbean Region, held on 6 May 1999 in Santiago, Chile, that the Commission should take responsibility for overall monitoring of the new cooperation and coordination mechanisms in the region.

Place and date of the meeting

2. In compliance with the above-mentioned mandates, the eighth meeting of Specialized Agencies and Other Bodies of the United Nations system on the Advancement of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean was held from 9 to 10 November 1999 in Santiago, Chile.

3. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following programmes, funds and specialized agencies of the United Nations system: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Labour Organization (ILO), Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Also attending were representatives of the ECLAC subregional headquarters in Mexico, the ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean and the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW/OAS).

B. AGENDA

4. The participants at the eighth meeting adopted the following agenda:

1. Relevant activities carried out or planned within the framework of the United Nations system in relation to women in Latin America and the Caribbean since the seventh session of the Regional Conference
2. Preparations for the eighth session of the Regional Conference to be held in Lima, Peru, from 8 to 10 February 2000 in relation to the issues of gender equity, human rights, and peace and violence, which were proposed for analysis by the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference at their twenty-seventh meeting

3. Preparations for the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”, to be held in New York from 5 to 9 June 2000 to appraise and assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the Beijing Platform for Action
4. Priority tasks and cooperation strategies for inter-agency regional coordination
5. Other matters

C. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

5. After welcoming the participants, the Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) referred to resolution 1998/46 of the Economic and Social Council of 30 July 1998 on further measures for restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in economic, social and related fields and to the Secretary-General’s decision to strengthen coordination in the region. In this connection, he recalled that an initial coordination meeting of United Nations bodies active in Latin America and the Caribbean had already been held in Santiago, Chile on 6 May 1999; on that occasion, the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations had requested ECLAC to take responsibility for overall monitoring of the new cooperation and coordination mechanisms and for convening an annual coordination meeting of all United Nations bodies and agencies involved in activities in the region.¹ The Secretary of the Commission said that the current meeting was an opportunity for participating agencies to pursue the exchange of information and make positive advances in coordinating the activities of the United Nations system with respect to women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

6. The Secretary of the Commission underscored the importance of preparations for the eighth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, which would serve as the regional preparatory meeting for the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century” (New York, 5-9 June 2000), and recalled that the resolutions adopted by the Regional Conference would be presented at the twenty-sixth session of the Commission (Mexico, April 2000) for ratification as a mandate for ECLAC.

Relevant activities carried out or planned within the framework of the United Nations system in relation to women in Latin America and the Caribbean since the seventh session of the Regional Conference (agenda item 1)

7. The representative of UNESCO announced that a Regional Adviser on Women’s Issues—attached to the UNESCO office in Quito (Ecuador)—had recently been appointed and was embarking on the preparation of a regional project for fostering a culture of peace in which special importance would be given to equality of opportunities for women in education, science and communications. As regards the follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action (adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing), UNESCO had accorded a high priority to fostering equality of opportunities of girl children and women, including equality of access to education and literacy; boosting the contribution of women to the culture of peace and to natural resource management and protection of the environment.

¹ See ECLAC (1999), *Information note on the United Nations inter-agency coordination meeting for the Latin American and Caribbean region*, Santiago, Chile, 6 May 1999 (LC/R.1917).

8. The ILO Senior Expert on Women's Issues for Latin America and the Caribbean said that the rights of working women and the promotion of employment for women were currently the priority areas for action aimed at eradicating poverty and fostering social dialogue. The organization was also pursuing other important goals, including monitoring compliance with ILO conventions, a research project on maquila enterprises in Central America and the adjustment of the data collection and statistical management systems.
9. The representative of the UNDP office in Chile said that the office sought to provide technical assistance to the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action through its programmes for the advancement of women and gender equality in the region. In addition to its participation in the Program for the Support of Women's Leadership and Representation (PROLEAD) together with IDB, UNICEF, UNIFEM, IACW/OAS and the Office of the Coordinator of non-governmental organizations for women's issues in Latin America and the Caribbean, UNDP was focusing its efforts at the national level in the following areas: strengthening the capacity of national mechanisms for the advancement of women and the national and regional capacity for integrating the gender perspective in public policies; human development and poverty eradication; macro-economic policies and national budgets for gender equality; incorporating the gender issue in statistics and indicators; dissemination of information and participation in the Global Campaign to Eliminate Violence against Women.
10. The UNICEF representative stated that since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, the Fund had centred its activities on incorporating human rights as the cornerstone of its work and had made serious efforts to link the provisions of that Convention with those of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women from the integrated perspective of the exercise of human rights. In terms of the Fund's mandate, that also implied closer integration of sectoral policies relating to health, education and the rights of the child. The abolition of child labour, health of girls and boys and citizenship of women were key issues on the Fund's agenda in relation to gender.
11. The Subregional Director for South America of the World Food Programme (WFP) referred to decentralization of the organization's operations worldwide and to efforts being made to integrate women in decision-making bodies, as a result of which 50% of WFP posts and the majority of its senior posts in the Latin American region were currently held by women. The Regional Programme Coordinator then reported on the activities carried out in Latin America and the Caribbean within the framework of commitments relating to women(1996-2001) defined by the organization in connection with the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, which were concerned essentially with food security for women and the latter's potential for generating resources and for empowering them to assume a role in power structures and decision-making.
12. The representative of the Pan-American Health Organization indicated that the latter's two main areas of work were violence against women and health sector reforms as they related to gender equity, both being closely related to human rights. PAHO had participated with other bodies in the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations on projects for designing public policy. Motivating men to assume a more important role in reproductive health, defined as not just a woman's problem but one that involved the whole family, was another important area of action.
13. The representative of the Inter-American Commission of the Organization of American States (IACW/OAS) referred to the Summit of the Americas and underscored the importance of following up on issues such as strengthening national mechanisms for the advancement of women, equality under the law, the preparation of gender indicators on the status of women in the region, health policies and violence. One of the Commission's foremost activities in that respect was monitoring compliance by OAS member States with the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará). In that

connection, she referred to a project being implemented to assess the advances made in the first five years of the Convention's existence, with a view to the preparation of a status report and the formulation of proposals for the future.

14. The FAO representative reported on that organization's Plan of Action for Women in Development, 1996-2001, entitled, "Gender: key to sustainability and food security", which constituted the framework for assistance to countries in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and for mainstreaming the gender perspective within the organization. The central elements of the Plan of Action included placing an accounting value on the work and contribution of rural women and the need to incorporate variables to reflect them in statistical analysis; the participation of peasant organizations public policy-making; the adoption of institutional mechanisms that would guarantee for women access to, and appropriate use of, natural resources with special emphasis on land; mainstreaming the gender perspective in plans for land reclamation for agricultural uses underway in the region, and awareness-building and training for FAO staff in charge of project execution both in countries and in the organization's various programmes.

15. The representative of UNIFEM pointed out that the main areas of work related to the priority subjects covered by the Fund, defined for the four following years as violence against women, the economic empowerment of women, the effects of globalization and trade agreements, governance and human rights. In addition, many of the Fund's activities were directed towards strengthening national mechanisms for the advancement of women in the region.

16. The representative of UNHCR reported that the refugee situation in the region had improved over the last decade thanks to activities designed to facilitate the massive return and resettlement of refugees in Central America. The basic lines of work of that agency were to provide international legal protection to refugees and to seek a lasting solution to their plight; violence and human rights and refugee women and children. Moreover, it was endeavouring to provide training in the gender perspective to persons that worked directly with refugees in the region.

17. The Director of the Latin America and the Caribbean Division of UNFPA pointed out that in recent years, the Fund had prioritised human rights, especially reproductive rights, empowerment of women and gender equity. On the new UNFPA agenda, men were also being treated as the subjects of population programmes and involving them was part of the Fund's strategy to achieve equality and the respect of their rights in the area of sexual health and reproductive. Other working areas in which they were centring their regional projects and national programmes, usually executed by non-governmental organizations (NGO), were teenage pregnancy, sex education programmes for young people, indigenous women, promoting male responsibility in reproduction, gender violence, support to groups of women parliamentarians for fostering legal reforms and political and financial support to national mechanisms for the advancement of women.

18. The Social Affairs Officer of the Women and Development Unit of ECLAC referred, firstly, to the mandate of the Economic and Social Council on incorporating the gender perspective in diagnostic analyses and proposals of public policies formulated by ECLAC. Within that framework, advances had been made in developing a system of indicators for analysing and following through with such policies; several documents had been produced on the issue, technical assistance had been provided to Chile and Ecuador and a meeting of experts on gender indicators and public policy in Latin America had been held (Santiago, Chile, 21-22 October 1999). ECLAC was preparing, in conjunction with PAHO, a project for the design of gender indicators in the area of health, which would be not only of a descriptive nature but would also make it possible to collect useful information for the formulation of proposals for health sector reforms. With respect to mainstreaming the gender perspective in ECLAC, she reported on the technical support being provided by the Unit in collaboration with the respective subregional headquarters for Central America and the Caribbean with a view to incorporating the gender perspective in the ECLAC *Manual para la estimación de los*

efectos socioeconómicos de los desastres naturales. Another good example of how the Unit's work range had been expanded was its participation in drafting the position paper prepared by the ECLAC secretariat for presentation at the forthcoming session of the Commission, which had been an opportunity to study in greater depth the issue of economic, political and social rights and to place emphasis on its natural link with social equity, not only in socioeconomic terms but also as regards the exercise of citizenship by women.

19. Referring to the shared aspects of the activities relating to women carried out by the agencies participating in the meeting, the Chief of the Women and Development Unit underscored the conceptual advances relating to the gender perspective. Among other things, the human rights perspective had been widely applied by agencies, and its action was based on issues that transcended sectoral areas such as reproduction, labour and health. Furthermore, another conceptual leap was needed in order to take into consideration other more general issues, such as the role of the State and macroeconomic reforms, with a view to analysing processes from a general perspective. That would call for additional knowledge, further reflection and more effective and creative work.

20. In general, participating agencies recognized the need to continue advancing with the development of a set of gender indicators and to strengthen inter-agency collaboration in all spheres. Deepening the human rights focus with a view to defining its conceptual content more accurately was one possible key area around which the work of organizations could be structured. Agencies also agreed on the need to rationalize the efforts of all those involved as well as the offer of technical cooperation to countries in order to cover all the strategic areas of the Platform for Action and the Regional Programme of Action and to avoid dispersal of resources.

Preparations for the eighth session of the Regional Conference, to be held in Lima, Peru, from 8 to 10 February 2000 in relation to the issues of gender equity, human rights, and peace and violence, which were proposed for analysis by the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference at their twenty-seventh meeting and preparations for the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", to be held in New York from 5 to 9 June 2000 to appraise and assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the Beijing Platform for Action (agenda items 2 and 3)

21. The Social Affairs Officer of the Women and Development Unit explained that the Commission's activities in connection with agenda items 2 and 3 were directed towards facilitating coordination between Governments, the United Nations system and civil society, the three essential actors in both of those meetings. She recalled that Governments had agreed to treat the items selected for the eighth session of the Regional Conference under a common theme, "Gender equity, the foundation for a just and equitable society", which tied it in with the theme of the forthcoming session; furthermore, it was in keeping with the recommendations formulated at the United Nations Inter-agency Coordination Meeting for the Latin American and Caribbean Region. With respect to the Unit's substantive contributions to the preparations for the Conference, which would serve as the regional preparatory meeting for the special session of the General Assembly, she mentioned the preparation of studies on gender indicators, changes to the judicial system, human rights considered from the perspective of economic and social rights as well as civil and political rights and their relationship with public policy and compliance with agreements undertaken by the countries signatories of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. She also reported on the subregional preparatory meetings that had taken place in the preceding quarter in Central America and the Caribbean and described the inter-agency coordination activities, of which the current meeting was part.

22. The Chief of the Women and Development Unit presented the document entitled "The challenge of gender equity and human rights on the threshold of the twenty-first century" prepared by

the ECLAC secretariat as a draft position paper designed to convey the viewpoint of all Governments in the region at the eighth session of the Regional Conference and which incorporated the contributions and inputs of agencies in the United Nations system, information provided by countries in response to the questionnaire of the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations and documents prepared by institutions of civil society. She pointed out that it was not a diagnostic study but rather a reflection on the diagnoses and information available. The document was an effort to present the two subjects of analysis in a single text, applying an integrated approach to public policy; it revealed that the advances in the status of women were in contrast with the appearance of new inequalities. The document also called into question the current development model and the treatment of some problems that affected humanity as a whole.

23. Some agencies underscored the value of the methodology used in preparing the document, which offered both a global and a transdisciplinary appreciation of the issues under consideration. Following some specific comments on the treatment of sectoral issues, the organization which had promised to prepare reference documents for the eighth session of the Regional Conference gave status reports on the current stage of preparation reached.

24. The representative of UNIFEM presented the preliminary version of the document "Gender Budget Initiative for Latin America: A Tool for Improving Accountability and Implementation of Government Policy and Programs", a document —addressed to Governments as well as civil society and women's groups in the region— which was conceived as a contribution to consideration of the issue of budgets and a source of information on formulating them from a gender perspective.

25. The UNESCO representative said that her organization was preparing a document for the special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".

26. The ILO representative explained that her organization had requested that documents should be prepared in each region for presentation at the special session of the General Assembly and that the regional office would be responsible for coordinating the document relating to Latin America and the Caribbean, which would be submitted at the eighth session of the Regional Conference. The document would review developments regarding promotion of the quality of jobs for women between 1990 and 1998, from a gender perspective; the question of formality and informality on labour markets, in the context of the increasingly precarious job situation; the relationship of the years of schooling with all types of inequality in employment for women, and social security.

27. The FAO representative stated that the Fund's Women and Population Division was in the process of presenting its global report on advances made in implementing the Plan of Action for Women in Development, 1996-2001 for approval at the thirtieth session of the FAO Conference in November 1999. The document represented the proposed framework for regional reports and the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean would be in charge of coordinating the report on the region. As regards the diagnostic analysis presented in the global report, she said that the decline in agricultural employment and the increase in female migration were symptomatic of the lack of opportunities for women in rural areas. The report stressed the need to promote gender equity in sectoral policies and in mechanisms for correlative applications, such as the right to land and to its full use, the preservation of traditional knowledge and management of agricultural biodiversity, and the improvement of agricultural statistics and censuses from the gender perspective.

28. The representative of the World Food Programme said that the document being prepared for the Regional Conference focused on food security and how women helped to generate it through examples of best practices promoted by the agency in that regard. Those examples illustrated the support programmes designed to enable women to benefit on an equal basis from food aid and to acquire goods for their own well-being and that of their families.

29. The UNICEF representative explained that one major aim of the document was to identify the conceptual issues on which the work of UNICEF was based and to establish the relationship between the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in the sense that those mandates were the foundation for ethical principles for living in society and should be considered fundamental also for public policy. The document showed that the basic pillar of human rights was the establishment of relationships between individuals and the State in a non-discriminatory framework, and stressed also the need to recognize the human life cycle as a fundamental element of public policy-making.

30. The UNFPA representative said that two documents were being prepared by the Fund for presentation at the eighth session of the Regional Conference: a report on the Fund's contributions to implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and a document on legislation passed since 1994 in the area of sexual and reproductive health and sexual and reproductive rights. The second document would examine to what extent the commitments contained in the Cairo Programme of Action had been enacted into laws or decrees. She said that important strides had been noted in the area of legislation but that there was a lack of administrative instruments and mechanisms for enabling their full application.

Priority tasks and cooperation strategies for inter-agency regional coordination (agenda item 4)

31. The agencies and bodies represented at the meeting prepared an activities matrix relating to women in order to identify priority tasks and cooperation strategies on a rational basis. A series of agreements was reached aimed at providing a firm basis for inter-agency coordination.

D. AGREEMENTS ADOPTED

The participants in the meeting adopted the following agreements:

1. To send to the ECLAC secretariat the necessary data for completing the activities matrix, that is, the priority subject areas within the framework of the gender mandates, the principle programmes and projects and their geographic location in the region, and the priorities identified for the future, in order to ensure that it has the necessary information for developing coordination strategies within the United Nations system.
2. To support the efforts of countries of the region to participate in the eighth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, which will be held from 8 to 10 February 2000 in Lima, Peru and to support those countries wishing to include non-governmental organizations in their official delegations.
3. To support efforts by non-governmental organizations and civil society in general to participate in preparatory activities for the Regional Conference and the special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", and in those meetings themselves.
4. To take steps to incorporate the gender perspective in the common assessments for countries done periodically within the United Nations system and within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

5. To request the ECLAC secretariat to take the necessary measures to incorporate in the reference documentation for the eighth session of the Regional Conference the results of the study being conducted by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) on the costs of violence against women.
6. With respect to inter-agency coordination, to elaborate two cooperation projects at the regional level, one on a system of gender indicators and the other on mainstreaming the gender perspective in public policy. Both studies are to be analysed at a follow-up meeting which will be held in connection with the Regional Conference, for presentation at the second inter-agency coordination meeting of United Nations bodies for the region of Latin America and the Caribbean scheduled to be held in May 2000.

Annex

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**Programmes and Specialized Agencies of the United Nations**

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Sylvia Broder, Senior Programme Officer

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Rogelio Fernández-Castillo, Resident Representative
Marisela Padrón Quero, Director, Latin America and the Caribbean Division

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Etna Atero, Officer in charge of Social Work UNHCR/Social Pastoral Vicariate

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Gladys Acosta Vargas, Regional Advisor on Women and Gender Equity

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

Branca Moreira, Regional Coordinator

World Food Programme (WFP)

James F. Conway, Subregional Director for South America
Teresa Mosquere, Regional Programme Coordinator

International Labour Organization (ILO)

Lais Abramo, Senior Expert on Gender Issues

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Zoraida García, Programme Officer, Women in Development Service
Marcela Ballara, Senior Officer, Women in Development

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

María Luisa Jáuregui, Education Expert, Coordinator for Gender Issues

Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO)/World Health Organization (WHO)

Cristina Nogueira, Representative
Susan Thollaug, Consultant

Inter-governmental bodies

Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW/OAS)

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