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**REPORT OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH MEETING OF THE PRESIDING OFFICERS
OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN
INTO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

(Santiago, Chile, 17 November 1997)

CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraph</u>	<u>Page</u>
A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK.....	1-4	1
Place and date of the meeting	1	1
Attendance	2	1
Chairperson and rapporteur	3	1
Documentation.....	4	1
B. AGENDA.....	5	2
C. OPENING MEETING.....	6	3
D. SUMMARY OF THE PROCEEDINGS	7-17	3
E. AGREEMENTS ADOPTED	18	5
Annex LIST OF PARTICIPANTS.....	-	7

A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place and date of the meeting

1. The Presiding Officers of the Regional conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean held their twenty-fifth meeting on 17 November 1997 at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago, Chile.

Attendance¹

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following States members and associate member serving as Presiding Officers: Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia, Chile, Cuba, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles and Uruguay. The following United Nations body was represented at the meeting: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The following United Nations specialized agencies were also represented: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Chairperson and rapporteur

3. The meeting was chaired by the Chairperson, Ambassador Zelmira Regazzoli. The functions of rapporteur were entrusted to the Mexican delegation, headed by Ambassador Aída González, Coordinator for Women's Issues for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico.

Documentation

4. The delegations had before them the following documents: Provisional agenda (LC/L.1052(CRM.7/1)); Annotated provisional agenda and organization of the seventh session of the Regional Conference (LC/L.1059(CRM.7/2)); Activities of the ECLAC secretariat relating to the integration of women into the economic and social development of Latin America and the Caribbean from 1 June 1994 to 30 August 1997 (LC/L.1062(CRM.7/3)); Activities at the Caribbean subregional level relating to the integration of women into the economic and social

¹ See annex.

development of Latin America and the Caribbean from 1 June 1994 to 30 August 1997 (LC/L.1062(CRM.7/3)/Add.1); Access to power and participation in decision-making in Latin America and the Caribbean: policies for gender equity looking to the year 2000 (LC/L.1063(CRM.7/4)); Sustainable development, poverty and gender in Latin America and the Caribbean: working towards the year 2000 (LC/L.1064(CRM.7/5)); Documents presented at the seventh session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/L.1066(CRM.7/6)); Towards equality for women. Progress in legislation since the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (DDR/1); Gender, the environment and the sustainability of development (DDR/2); Women's non-governmental organizations and the State. Reflections on a relationship (DDR/3); La educación de las mujeres: de la marginalidad a la coeducación. Propuestas para una metodología de cambio educativo (DDR/4) (Spanish only); Violencia en la pareja. Tratamiento legal, evolución y balance (DDR/5) (Spanish only); Compartir las responsabilidades familiares: una tarea para el desarrollo (DDR/6) (Spanish only); Directory of national organizations dealing with programmes and policies on women in Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/L.1065); Género, pobreza y seguridad social en Centroamérica (LC/MEX/L.342) (Spanish only); Poverty and gender inequity: sexual and reproductive health and rights in Latin America and the Caribbean, prepared by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

B. AGENDA

5. The Presiding Officers adopted the following agenda for their twenty-fifth meeting:
 1. Adoption of the agenda
 2. Review of the activities of the Presiding Officers and the ECLAC secretariat since the twenty-fourth meeting of the Presiding Officers on 27 and 28 May 1997
 3. Review of documents for the seventh session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean
 4. Organization of the work of the Conference: provisional information on the next meeting of Presiding Officers; organization of the work of countries represented on the committees established to study different issues; consideration of a possible draft communiqué of the Conference
 5. Other matters

C. OPENING MEETING

6. The Chairperson of the Presiding Officers welcomed the participants and thanked the host country for its hospitality. She reviewed the coordination-related tasks carried out by the Presiding Officers since their twenty-fourth meeting. Continued efforts were needed in order to increase the Governments' awareness of the importance of the Presiding Officers and of the need to implement the actions outlined in the eight strategic areas of the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001.

D. SUMMARY OF THE PROCEEDINGS

Review of the activities of the Presiding Officers and the ECLAC secretariat since the twenty-fourth meeting of the Presiding Officers on 27 and 28 May 1997 (agenda item 2)

7. With regard to agenda item 2, the Presiding Officers reviewed the liaison activities carried out in order to document and support the preparations for the seventh session of the Regional Conference. Of particular importance in that regard was the report of the CARICOM/ECLAC/UNIFEM Post-Beijing Encounter: A Caribbean Subregional Ministerial Conference, which had been held in Georgetown, Guyana, from 6 to 8 August 1997. The Georgetown Consensus adopted at that meeting would serve as an input for the deliberations of the seventh session of the Regional Conference. Close contact had also been maintained with the Central American countries and, in general, each country had fully discharged its responsibilities, marshalling the necessary efforts to overcome the difficulties encountered in some cases.

8. The secretariat informed the participants that guidelines had been sent out to the countries for the preparation of their reports. An information brochure had also been prepared to assist new members of the various delegations. In addition, the secretariat had prepared the relevant documents for the session, including an activities report covering the period since 1994, which contained a special chapter on the Caribbean, and position papers on the two main questions to be addressed by the Conference. A directory of national organizations dealing with programmes and policies on women in Latin America and the Caribbean had been completed, and background papers on legislation, poverty in Central America, gender and the environment, and educational policies designed with a view to gender equity and shared family responsibilities.

9. In respect of inputs from other United Nations bodies, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) had prepared a document entitled "Poverty and gender inequity: sexual and reproductive health and rights in Latin America and the Caribbean" which had been reproduced and distributed by the secretariat.

10. The secretariat went on to report upon the activities being undertaken in an effort to mainstream the gender perspective in ECLAC programmes and projects. Meetings had been held in

that connection at the highest level, and the fact that those concerned stood ready and willing to collaborate in that effort had been evident on each such occasion.

Review of documents for the seventh session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (agenda item 3)

11. The documents referred to in agenda item 2 were distributed to the delegations of the participating countries.

Organization of the work of the Conference: provisional information on the next meeting of the Presiding Officers; organization of the work of countries represented on the committees established to study different issues; consideration of a possible draft communiqué of the Conference (agenda item 4)

12. The secretariat said that various member countries had expressed an interest, in some cases via their foreign ministries, in serving as Presiding Officers. The interested countries were Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, El Salvador, Mexico, Paraguay and Venezuela. To date, no such expression of interest had been received from any of the English-speaking Caribbean countries. The candidates and possible number of Presiding Officers were then discussed.

13. As of Friday, 14 November, 33 member countries and associate members of ECLAC had confirmed their plans to attend the Conference, as had 10 agencies and other bodies belonging to the United Nations system, five intergovernmental bodies and various non-governmental women's organizations. Most of the delegations would be formed by a number of people, and a high level of representation had been achieved.

14. Other activities prior to the seventh session of the Regional Conference were discussed, including a meeting of non-governmental organizations and a meeting of United Nations bodies, both to be held on Tuesday, 18 November. The results of those meetings would serve as valuable inputs for the work of the Conference.

15. With regard to the work of the countries represented on the committees responsible for the two topics to be addressed at the Conference, Argentina, Cuba and Mexico presented a summary of the presentations to be made in each of the working groups, with emphasis on the issue of political participation in the case of Argentina and on the question of the family and socialization, particularly as they related to early training in power sharing, in the case of Mexico. The representative of Cuba stated that her country had conducted an in-depth study on the issue of poverty and had maintained its fellow committee member, Honduras, apprised of the progress of that research effort.

16. The possibility of issuing a declaration at the conclusion of the Conference was considered. In that regard, the representative of Chile said that the host country would be circulating an unofficial text among the delegations as its contribution to the drafting of such a declaration.

Other matters (agenda item 5)

17. The Presiding Officers discussed the possibility of considering draft resolutions on other specific topics, in addition to the above-mentioned declaration. One such topic might be the importance of incorporating the gender perspective when assessing the impact of natural disasters such as the recent catastrophe in Montserrat; another might be the possibility of changing the name of the Regional Conference to reflect its current interests and focus more accurately and clearly. Another possibility that might be explored was that of drafting a resolution on the need to strengthen government offices responsible for dealing with women's affairs and the allocation of the necessary resources for that purpose.

E. AGREEMENTS ADOPTED

18. During the final plenary session of their twenty-fifth meeting, the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean adopted the following agreements on the organization of the work to be carried out at the seventh session of the Regional Conference:

- (a) At the meeting of heads of delegation to be held on Wednesday, 19 November, the Chairperson of the Presiding Officers will emphasize the fact that service as a Presiding Officer entails a certain financial responsibility, inasmuch as the regular attendance of the Officers at two working meetings per year must be ensured. A prior consideration of this situation and communication via the relevant foreign ministry might therefore be the best way for countries to transmit their formal acceptance of such a commitment.
- (b) The proposed declaration should not contain any diagnostic analyses, nor should it reiterate measures that have already been set forth in instruments approved at the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting in Mar del Plata or at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. The document must be concise and should propose very specific, effective measures that can be implemented by the countries without delay.
- (c) In response to the need for renewed dynamism and more broadly based participation by the countries, it is recognized that the reinforcement of the Presiding Officers' role during the last interim period, has made it possible to carry out the preparations for the seventh session of the Regional Conference in close collaboration with the secretariat. Since the twenty-third meeting, a provisional agenda for the Conference has been prepared, the session's logistic and substantive aspects have been examined, a strategy for maintaining a flow of information and communication among the countries has been set up, and it has been agreed that Argentina and Mexico will make a presentation on the subject of women's access to power and participation in decision-making at the

session while Cuba and Honduras will be responsible for the presentation on the topic of sustainable development, poverty and gender.

- (d) In addition to the above, the schedule for the seventh session will be as follows: the plenary session will be held on Wednesday afternoon, 19 November; at that time the agenda will be adopted and the new Presiding Officers will be elected. The outgoing Chairperson of the Presiding Officers will provide an overview of the activities carried out and will congratulate the Presiding Officers on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Regional Conference. Following the presentation to be made by the secretariat, a general discussion will be held regarding the activities conducted in the countries since 1994. The incoming Chairperson will then inform the participants that the Chilean delegation will be circulating an unofficial text as its contribution to a document that may be issued in the form of a declaration by the Regional Conference at its seventh session. It will also be announced that the deadline for the submission of other draft resolutions will be 6 p.m. on Thursday, 20 November.
- (e) As previously agreed, the working groups formed to consider the two main topics of the seventh session will begin their work at 9 a.m. on Thursday, 20 November, with an explanation of the approaches used to address these issues in their respective countries. In the first group, the presentation will be given by Mexico (9-9.15 a.m.) and Argentina (9.15-9.30 a.m.). From 9.30 to 11.00 a.m., the other representatives will speak on these issues, with a time limit of 5 minutes each. From 11.15 a.m. to 1 p.m., a debate will be held on the proposals that have been presented, taking into account the unofficial text sponsored by the Chilean delegation. In the second group, a similar approach will be used, with initial presentations being made by Cuba and Honduras. From 2.30 to 4 p.m., the delegations will complete their analysis and comments on the proposals and will then conclude, during the final afternoon meeting, with an examination of those aspects of the draft declaration relating to the topics addressed by each working group.
- (f) During the plenary session to be held on Friday morning, 21 November, the delegations will consider other matters, including any draft resolutions that may have been submitted. At 4 p.m. the plenary session will be reconvened to consider adoption of the declaration for issuance by the Regional Conference at its seventh session.

Annex

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**States members and associate members of the Commission****ARGENTINA**

Zelmira M. Regazzolli, Embajadora, Subsecretaría de Derechos Humanos y la Mujer, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Comercio Internacional y Culto

Julio Piquer, Comisión ad hoc, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Comercio Internacional y Culto

BARBADOS

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Shirley Stroude, Senior Administrative Officer, Ministry of Labour, Community Development and Sports

BOLIVIA

Carolina Toledo, Viceministra de Género, Generacionales y Familia

CHILE

Josefina Bilbao, Ministra Directora del Servicio Nacional de la Mujer (SERNAM)

Teresa Rodríguez, Jefa del Departamento de Relaciones Internacionales y Cooperación, Servicio Nacional de la Mujer (SERNAM)

CUBA

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Magalys Arocha, Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, Federación de Mujeres Cubanas
Ana Silvia Rodríguez, Ministerio de Inversión Económica

MEXICO

Embajadora Aída González Martínez, Coordinadora de Asuntos de la Mujer, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores
Dulce María Sauri Riancho, Coordinadora General del Programa Nacional de la Mujer

NETHERLANDS ANTILLES

Edith Strauss-Marsera, Minister of Welfare, Family and Humanitarian Affairs

URUGUAY

Alba Osos de Lanza, Directora, Instituto Nacional de la Familia y la Mujer

United Nations bodies

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
Belkys Mones

Specialized agencies

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
Lucia Quezada, Associate Officer

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María Luisa Jáuregui, Regional Specialist in Women's Education

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