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# REPORT OF THE REGIONAL SEMINAR FOR LATIN AMERICA ON THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO POPULATION FACTORS

(Caracas, 28 April-2 May 1975)

Note: This text, submitted by the secretariat at the sixteenth session of ECLA, is subject to the incorporation of observations by some of the participating experts, who undertook to communicate these to the secretariat by 20 May 1975.

CONTENTS

# I. ORGANIZATION OF THE SEMINAR

## Duration of the Seminar

1. The Regional Seminar for Latin America on the Integration of Women in Development, organized by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations with the collaboration of ECLA, was held in the Parque Central Conference Centre (Edificio Anauco), Caracas, Venezuela, from 28 April to 2 May 1975.

## Attendance

2. The Seminar was attended by representatives of the member States of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), observers from non-member States, and representatives of organizations of the United Nations system and other inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations. Ms. María del Carmen Elú de Leñero (Mexico) and Ms. Gladys López de Vásquez (Venezuela) took part in the proceedings by special invitation (a complete list of the participants is given in Annex I).

## Opening and closing meetings

3. At the opening meeting on 28 April, statements were made by Ms. Helvi Sipila, Under-Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, who represented the Secretary-General of the United Nations - and read a message from him - and the Executive Secretary of ECLA, and by Dr. Pablo Salcedo Nadal, Deputy Minister of Health and Social Assistance of Venezuela.

4. At the closing meeting statements were made by Ms. Helvi Sipila, Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations, Mr. Enrique V. Iglesias, Executive Secretary of ECLA, by the representative of Colombia, Mrs. Josefina Amizquito de Almeyda, who thanked the Venezuelan authorities, on behalf of all the delegations, for the hospitality extended, and by the Chairman of the Seminar and representative of Venezuela, Mrs. María Carmona de Chacón.

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## Election of Officers

5. At the first working meeting, held on 28 April 1975, the participants elected the following Officers:

Chairman: María Carmona de Chacón (Venezuela)

First Vice-Chairman: Federico Soncira (Uruguay)

Second Vice-Chairman: Gertrude Lilian Eastman (Barbados)

Rapporteur: Carlota Vargas (Mexico)

## Working Groups

6. Two Working Groups, made up of one or more representatives from each of the delegations interested in participating in them, were set up to consider the documents submitted at the Seminar. Working Group 1 was chaired by the representative of Uruguay and Working Group 2 by the representative of Barbados.

7. The results of the proceedings of the Working Groups were transmitted to the Plenary of the Seminar for its approval and are given in Part III of this report.

## II. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

8. The participants agreed that as a rule of procedure decisions and recommendations would be taken by consensus, as befitted a seminar of government experts. That was done, subject to the reservations noted below.

9. In their opening statements, participants briefly outlined the situation of women in their respective countries, drawing attention to those points which, in their opinion, were factors fundamental to analysis of and action on the problem.

10. An item which rapidly emerged as very important and dominated the spirit of the meeting, receiving the express and reiterated support of the Latin American representatives was, the broad structural character of the problem under discussion. In that connexion, it was stated that there was a close link between the social status of women and the general problems of a country's development. It was stated that discrimination against women stemmed from the problems of society as a whole and that, in the case of the Latin American countries, it could not be disassociated from the problems of underdevelopment in all its multiple social manifestations, inter alia, deficiencies with regard to nutrition, education, health and employment which had the greatest effect on the poorest social strata.

11. It was generally accepted that a comprehensive solution to the problem of sex inequality could not be achieved in a social structure where there were other types of discrimination against human beings also. One delegation said that there could be no equality between men and women as long as there was inequality among the groups which made up society and among the countries which constituted the international community.

12. It was also mentioned that the problems arising from discrimination against women affected not only women but all human beings: in other words, any progress in this field would have to be the outcome of a combined effort of men and women aimed at more complete fulfilment of the human condition, irrespective of any social or sexual distinctions.

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13. It was further stated that discrimination based on sex affected women everywhere, whether they lived in developing or in developed countries, albeit in different ways. However, some experts expressed certain reservations and emphasized the special nature of the "problem of women" living in conditions of dependent underdevelopment. A number of participants pointed out that the solution to the problem of women could not be disassociated from those affecting social structures in underdeveloped countries, but the point was also made that appropriate action should not be deferred and that it was therefore necessary to propose and put immediately into practice measures aimed at combating discrimination based on sex.

14. Consequently, the problem of Latin American women should be set more squarely within the general context of development problems without losing its specificity. In that connexion, it was felt that women must join in the efforts aimed at bringing about the social change necessary for raising their level of participation in society. It would not be equitable for women to benefit by progress in which they took no part. The participation of women in every sphere of social life was therefore not just an objective but a requirement for the transformation of society.

15. Concerning legislation regarding women, most of the participants informed the Seminar of the situation in their own countries. It thus became clear that considerable progress had been made in every case in respect of the abrogation of laws discriminating against women and that legislation in general was tending to increase and improve their participation in society. Although genuine progress had been made, it varied from country to country; some boasted almost complete equality while others still had a long way to go. At all events, there was clearly a general trend in the right direction, i.e., towards putting an end to juridical discrimination against women.

16. When the status of women with regard to employment was considered, it was found from the information supplied by the various delegations that the situation was not the same in all the countries. In some, although women spent more years in school and accounted for the greater part of the labour force, they suffered from just as much discrimination

/as in

as in others. To a greater or lesser extent, the situation in most Latin American countries was as follows: (a) most working women were employed in the services sector; (b) there were preconceived ideas about the kind of work that was suitable for men and the kind that was suitable for women, the prestige and opportunities for organizational leadership varying accordingly; (c) generally speaking, women were paid less than men for equal work; (d) rural women had to play a dual role as housewives and agricultural workers and participated in the latter work on the same basis as men; (e) in most Latin American countries there were high rates of unemployment and underemployment, but the figures were proportionally higher in the case of women, whose occupational instability was therefore much greater.

17. The conclusion was reached that various factors were responsible for the fact that women did not have equal employment opportunities or receive equal financial remuneration and social recognition in keeping with their abilities.

18. Current statistical methods did not acknowledge women's contribution to economic growth, because the way in which the gross national product was measured did not attach any economic value to their work in the home, to volunteer work, to their collaboration in family business, or to unpaid work done to help their husbands. It was therefore particularly recommended that new methods should be studied for calculating the economic value of the various ways in which women contributed to the development effort.

19. Generally speaking, women were barred, from those institutional and organizational levels where major decisions were taken, an example of this being the situation that existed in many countries where, although the primary, intermediate and higher levels of the education system were dominated by women and there were industries in which most of the workers and employees were women, nevertheless the decision-making and administrative posts were in the hands of men. The same was true for political parties, trade unions, public and private enterprises, and administrative and political bodies, where the management was usually predominantly male.

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20. It was also necessary to recognize that motherhood was an event of profound social significance, and not an individual burden to which women must resign themselves without adequate assistance. Pregnant women should not be restricted in their opportunities to work, since they were in fact making an invaluable contribution to their country by ensuring the continuity of the population. Motherhood therefore deserved social recognition in every sense, and women's employment opportunities should not suffer in the process. On the contrary, the Seminar recommended that, at the same time as this social aspect of motherhood was taken into account, measures should be introduced to guarantee women's job tenure or subsequent re-incorporation into the labour force without its affecting their promotion possibilities.

21. As regards health, it was generally recognized that women's health was part of their position in society, which it affected just as much as in the case of the health of the family. To solve this problem, it was necessary to make better and more complete health and nutrition services available both to women and to their families, whether in urban or in rural areas, and special attention should be given to the underprivileged and lower-income sectors.

22. With regard to discriminatory practices, it was stated that, while rapid progress was being made in the abrogation of discriminatory legal provisions against women, social mores and customs still involved considerable discrimination, even where a measure of juridical equality had been achieved. Considerable importance was attached to the need for doing away with these social practices which sometimes subtly but effectively discriminated against women.

23. In this connexion, measures aimed at resolving such problems should contemplate not only juridical and organizational changes, but also the thorough transformation of attitudes and customs standing in the way of women's equal participation in society.

24. In the course of the debate on this point, reference was made to the fact that discrimination stemmed not only from the values and attitudes of men but also from those of the women suffering from discrimination, who frequently themselves perpetuated the discriminatory mechanisms or used them against other women. There was general

/agreement on

agreement on the importance of the mass media in creating and disseminating the discriminatory and preconceived social images.

25. A large number of delegations placed special emphasis on the need to devote proper attention to education, which was a central element in changing present mental structures and achieving true and greater equality between men and women in the long run, as it could modify the attitudes and values prevailing in the existing discriminatory social climate.

26. There was also general agreement on the need to strive for integral education to combat society's preconceived ideas regarding relations between the sexes, in the context of the development of an independent and constructive personality conferring better opportunities on men and women for a fuller life. Education should therefore not impose an automatic and usually passive role on women. On the contrary, what was needed was that they should be trained to make the most of their social and human abilities and opportunities and, where they so desired, to compete at every level. It was also necessary to correct attitudes which, in one way or another, treated women as pawns in a consumer society or sex objects.

27. Education should therefore be reformulated so that, with the general consensus of society, women were considered real people with full human dignity who commanded social respect. On this point, some participants suggested specific measures such as, for example, the review of mass education, textbooks and adult training courses so that parents could transmit to their children a new conception of the social role of women in a juster society that afforded a better opportunity for the fulfilment of the human condition.

28. At the last plenary meeting, the government experts participating in the Seminar analysed and subsequently adopted a number of recommendations and proposals based on the deliberations of the two working groups set up to draft the corresponding texts. It was suggested that the "Declaration of the Seminar" adopted in the plenary should be entitled: The Latin American Consensus of Caracas.

29. At the last meeting, some non-Latin American participants expressed reservations as to the form and substance of the Declaration adopted by the Seminar. The United States delegation stated that it did not agree with some of the ideas contained in sub-paragraphs 11 (e) and (f) or with their wording as it stood. 1/

30. The United Kingdom representative expressed reservations regarding sub-paragraph 11 (e). The Canadian and French delegations also reserved their governments' position, the former explaining that it had no instructions on the subject.

31. After appropriate discussion and consultation, the Chairman of the Seminar decided to uphold the rules of procedure concerning the taking of decisions and ruled that the reservations referred to - which did not affect the Latin American Consensus of Caracas since they only related to non-Latin American members of ECLA - should be submitted to the secretariat in writing within 15 days from the end of the Seminar. It was agreed that these reservations would be included in the summary of discussions in the final version of this report.

32. It should be noted, in conclusion, that representatives of United Nations specialized agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental bodies also spoke in the course of the discussions to inform participants of the activities of their organizations in this field and advised the meeting on a number of points raised by the Declaration adopted by consensus of all the Latin American countries.

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1/ See text in Part III of this report.

## III. TEXTS APPROVED BY THE SEMINAR

### 1

### DECLARATION OF THE SEMINAR

The experts participating in this Seminar:

1. Recognizing that, despite the advances made in the majority of the countries, there are still differences in the legal, political, economic and social status of women as compared with that of men,

2. Further recognizing that mere changes in the socio-economic structure of society will not by themselves ensure the elimination of discrimination against women,

3. Conscious that the problems of women are the problems of society as a whole, and that therefore changes in their present economic, political and social situation must be an integral part of efforts to transform the structures which stand in the way of the genuine satisfaction of the needs of women and other under-privileged groups,

4. Aware that in some countries a situation of inequality of women with respect to men still exists even on the juridical level, reassert that there can be no valid excuse for putting off the solution of this serious problem,

5. Recalling that one of the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter is that there should be international co-operation both in the solution of all types of international problems and in the promotion and stimulation of respect for the fundamental freedoms of all and for human rights irrespective of sex, race, language or creed,

6. Deeply convinced that the ultimate aim of every community is to achieve the full integration of all human beings into a juster and more equal social order, emphasize that this will only

/be possible

be possible when countries make efforts to raise the standards of living of the lowest socio-economic strata, so as to provide these groups, which generally constitute a large proportion of the total population of these countries, with a more just, dignified and human standard of living,

7. Bearing in mind the arbitrary and negative discrimination from which women suffer in the member countries of the international community irrespective of social group and whose problems are particularly apparant in the existence of a mistaken conception that distorts the real values of women as human beings in its ideological and practical manifestations, this anomaly must be overcome by adopting, in addition to the structural and fundamental measures contained in this declaration, other measures that can modify the concept of the human being and the image of men and women, within a broad perspective guaranteeing a common destiny of justice and solidarity,

8. Seeking to make a real contribution to the achievement of the aims of equality of rights, opportunities and responsibilities for both sexes, full integration of women into all aspects of the development effort, and the broadest participation of women in international co-operation and the strengthening of world peace,

9. Reasserting the urgent need to bring about a situation where women will have the same opportunities as men to develop their talents and aptitudes for the benefit of their personal fulfilment and for that of society, as part of a juster and more stable new international order in which the countries will be fully integrated and will participate equitably in the fruits of progress,

10. Bearing in mind that the crisis in the prevailing world international order, far from turning the attention of the world international community away from the pressing issues discussed in this Seminar, actually reveals their true significance,

/11. Declare

11. Declare that:

(a) The governments of the Latin American peoples should assume their responsibilities in respect of the problem of the integration of women into communities on an equal footing with men, by promoting a process of mass arousal of consciousness aimed at making a reality of the various educational, promotional and communications structures, with special reference to the training of women as one of the decisive means of their incorporation; in this respect, the full participation of women in the various social, political and cultural sectors is an important indicator of dynamic progress of the peoples and their development;

(b) The issue of inequality, as it affects the vast majority of the female population of Latin America, is closely linked with the problem of underdevelopment, which exists as a result not only of unsuitable internal structures, but also of a profoundly unjust world economic system;

(c) The prime responsibility for the integrated development of the countries of Latin America lies with the countries themselves, and they must therefore be prepared to make the necessary effort to resolve their problems, to mobilize their basic resources fully, to introduce the necessary changes in their economic and social structures so that they are able to integrate their human resources, with special attention to the particular importance of women in this process, so as to ensure collective participation in integrated development and the benefits accruing from it;

(d) The international community must therefore take urgent measures in keeping with the requirements of the Latin American countries, so as to co-operate with them in accelerating their rate of economic development and significantly improving the standards of living of their peoples, with special attention to the situation of women, who like other people in other

/underdeveloped parts

underdeveloped parts of the world experience and are confronted daily with an endless series of grave and pressing political, social and economic problems;

(e) In the face of this situation, it is essential to establish a new international economic order of which the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States constitutes a basic element, founded on equity, sovereign equality, interdependence, common interest, co-operation between all States whatever their economic and social systems, on shared responsibility for development, and wherever possible on the advance of the societies making up the international community and of women within those societies;

(f) The raising of the standard of living of millions of persons in Latin America, half of whom are women, to a level compatible with human dignity, the elimination of all forms of colonialism, neo-colonialism, foreign domination, foreign occupation and racial discrimination;

(g) The Achievement of general and complete disarmament and the full integration of women in the life of the countries in all fields and at all levels, providing them with training which will enable them better to carry out their functions, constitute a real challenge to the international community as a whole, and at the same time are indespensable conditions for the stability and well-being of all mankind and for world peace;

(h) Motherhood, as a social fact, deserves special attention from governments, which should devise a set of simultaneous and harmonious policies on health, education, nutrition, social security and labour matters, as these affect the mother and child, in order to foster suitable conditions for their full and proper development;

(i) The Latin American governments should devote due attention to the question of maternity and the upbringing of children insofar as they represent a responsibility of society, by creating appropriate conditions for their full realization;

/(j) Within

(j) Within the family community the couple should share rights, duties and obligations at an equal level of responsibility;

(k) The women of Latin America should realize the need for their incorporation in political activities at the national, regional and international levels, their participation in decision-making, planning and execution being an essential requirement in today's world;

(l) The health and well-being of women and the family have not attained acceptable levels, but the governments of the region have undertaken to carry out the Ten-Year Health Plan for the America's, which gives high priority to the reduction of morbidity and morality in those groups of the population. They must therefore promote action to extend the coverage of health services to the largest possible number of persons, and especially to those living in rural areas, while it is also necessary to foster community participation in the identification and solution of problems, to which it is necessary to seek new forms of integral health services with a novel approach permitting the incorporation of members of the community, especially women and suitably trained auxiliary personnel.

12. Reassert that the objectives considered in the present Declaration can only be achieved in a world in which the relations between States are governed inter alia by the following principles: the sovereign equality of States, the free self-determination of peoples, the unacceptability of acquiring territory by force, territorial integrity, and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other States, just as the relations between human beings must be governed by the supreme principle of absolute equality of rights for men and women.

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RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSED TO ECLA

The ECLA secretariat is recommended to:

1. Hold a regional conference after the World Conference of the International Women's Year in order to evaluate the results of the latter and consider its applications to the Latin American region;

2. Continue or initiate studies on the social, economic and cultural factors and the attitudes which condition the integration of women in development, with particular attention to:

(a) Integral education: training, arousing of consciousness, incorporation, qualitative aspects of education, systems and texts;

(b) The family: its structure and dynamics;

(c) Juridical considerations: legislation, jurisprudence, doctrine, customs and usage;

(d) The economic value of women's work in the home, in domestic production, in agriculture, in voluntary activities, and in other activities traditionally not remunerated;

(e) Equality of conditions, opportunities and treatment for women working in remunerated activities, and the problems connected with the incorporation of women in work;

(f) Political participation;

3. Establish the necessary machinery, in co-ordination with the organizations of the United Nations system and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, to assist Latin American governments in the formulation and execution of practical concrete measures in the areas indicated in the preceding paragraph and other areas considered to be relevant such as:

(a) Education with a view to arousing consciousness of the new roles of men and women:

(i) eradication of illiteracy;

(ii) preparation of educational material, for use in and out of schools, which would help to eliminate sex stereotypes;

/(iii) inclusion

(iii) inclusion at all levels of education of programmes of training for family life which stress the rights and obligations of family members;

(iv) non-discrimination as to sex in education: entry, programmes and vocational guidance with special stress on the elimination of attitudes which lead in practice to the existence of different occupations for women and men;

(v) continuing education: facilities for catching up regardless of age and for helping both those who failed to finish their education and those who have left the labour force but wish to return to it;

(vi) training of women in their traditional and non-traditional activities to permit their incorporation in the productive system;

(b) Employment

The following measures should be taken:

(i) to increase women's opportunities for entering productive activities at levels commensurate with their skills, with particular emphasis on self-employment such as co-operatives, cottage industries, crafts, etc.;

(ii) recognition of the economic value of women's work, including their household and agricultural work;

(iii) elimination of sex-based discrimination at all levels in government and private employment;

(iv) since motherhood is a social fact, services and facilities to support the dual role of women as mothers and workers should be established;

(v) the access of women to executive, management and planning levels in the public and private sectors should be promoted;

(c) Legislation

The following measures should be taken:

(i) law reform and the enactment of new laws to obviate discrimination by sex;

(ii) legislation on the family should reflect the realities of the different types of families and should be in keeping with the new concept of women within the family group;

/(d) Health

(d) Health

(i) Measures should be taken: to implement the necessary action to facilitate the access of women and families from the underprivileged rural or urban areas to integrated health and nutrition services;

(ii) to broaden the range of services to deal in depth with the health problems of women and children, these being the population groups which are most exposed to the risks of contracting possibly fatal illnesses;

(iii) to provide the community with the necessary information and services to enable couples to decide jointly the number and spacing of their children;

(e) Social communication media

The various information, educational, amusement and publicity areas of these media should be used to create greater awareness of the situation of women and to promote the changes to attitude by both men and women so as to further the integration of women in development, by taking the necessary measures to prevent the utilization of women as instruments of commercial attraction;

4. ECLA should recommend the Governments of Latin America to create national bodies, consisting of men and women, at high policy-making levels, for planning and implementing policies and programmes designed to integrate women in development at all levels and to keep their situation under constant review.

Annex I

ATTENDANCE */

*/ This Annex will be included in the final version of this report.

Annex II

STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA, IN CONNEXION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR IN HIS FIRST MESSAGE TO THE NATIONAL CONGRESS (12 MARCH 1975) 1/

This year was declared International Women's Year by the United Nations and the Year of Venezuelan Women by my Government. What better tribute to the women of Venezuela than to propose not only a reform of national legislation that discriminates against them but also a genuine equality of opportunity with men, so that they can take part in all the activities and positions of national life? I propose that the legislative and executive powers should plan together the measures that are needed to put into effect what is not only a legitimate and undeferable right of women but also an urgent national requirement for development. Half of the population of the country is made up of women.

The other fundamental aspect to which we should give our attention during the year of Venezuelan Women is their status as mothers. The responsibility of motherhood and will to be a mother must be supported by the State. Children must be desired. The Government will therefore take firm action to apply a policy of family planning in order to guide, educate and assist women in the satisfaction of their will.

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1/ This text was handed to Mrs. Helvi Sipila, Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations, by the President of the Republic. The participants in the Seminar, to whom the text was read at the reception held in the Palacio de Miraflores on 2 May 1975 and at the final plenary session, agreed to include it as an Annex to the Report of the Meeting.