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SECOND MEETING OF MINISTERS (REMIM II)
Best Practices in the Areas of Labor, Education and Justice

(Item 4 on the Agenda)

This document seeks to highlight the public policies and best practices of member states in the areas of education, justice, and labor. It was prepared on the basis of information submitted to REMIM-II by 16 member states in compliance with the Inter-American Program on the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality (PIA) and the recommendations of SEPIA-I, II and III.

Best practices are practices that have produced positive results and which may be considered as models for future action (*Best Practices and Gender Audits–Instruments for Local Politics. Olimpia de Gouges Project – May 2003*).

The complete texts of the reports can be found on the CIM website http://www.oas.org/cim/spanish/REMIM%20II.Indice.htm.

I. Education

1.1 *School dropout prevention programs*

Argentina, Colombia, El Salvador, Panama, Paraguay, and Venezuela have implemented short- and medium-term programs to keep students who are parents in school and special programs to support minorities. A few of them have adopted laws to prevent discrimination in public educational establishments or for the protection of children and adolescents. A law adopted by Argentina prohibits discrimination of any type in public establishments. Article 77.e of the Organic Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (LOPNA), adopted by Venezuela, prohibits sanctions because of pregnancy and guarantees that pregnant students may remain in school.

1.2 *Programs for the promotion of gender equality in the educational system*

The trend has been to promote mainstreaming of the gender perspective as a cross-cutting issue in national educational plans and programs: Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico, and Paraguay are developing programs to eliminate sexist practices in the classroom, while Costa Rica, El Salvador,

Nicaragua, Panama, and Paraguay have curricula that incorporate gender equity. Likewise, steps are being taken to create institutional mechanisms for mainstreaming the gender perspective into education ministries and their regional branches. This is the case in Venezuela and Ecuador, which established a coordinated approach to curriculum design by bringing together participants from various governmental and nongovernmental sectors. Two countries reported on the adoption of framework education laws, and Panama has reported the adoption of a law establishing the compulsory mainstreaming of the gender perspective into the language, content, and illustrations of the school texts and materials.

1.3 *Teacher training programs advocating the full integration of women*

Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, and Paraguay have promoted initiatives to include gender equality and human rights education in courses and programs for the training of teachers, administrators, authors, and textbook editors. Information was also provided on a series of televised lectures on gender and equality that facilitated teacher training throughout Mexico.

1.4 *Programs for promoting access by women to courses in non-traditional fields*

As part of its national policy, Canada has promoted the participation of women in university courses in the sciences and in engineering. In turn, Costa Rica has launched a program to incorporate women on an equal footing into diverse technical specialties. Other countries provided data on courses that encourage the participation of women in technical fields, including information technology, electricity, welding, and carpentry. Outstanding among these courses are those conducted by Panama, Paraguay, and Venezuela.

1.5 *Comprehensive child-care program*

Peru reported on the introduction of a national program to provide day care and comprehensive childcare for children under four.

1.6 *Programs for the prevention of sexual harassment in schools*

As a result of a national policy promoted by the Ministry of Education, Ecuador reported on the enactment of legislation instituting procedures and mechanisms for promoting awareness of and handling cases of sexual offences in educational institutions. Mexico reported on various courses introduced in the teacher training curriculum that would make it possible, by 2006, to cover the needs of the entire teacher force, guaranteeing the incorporation of the gender perspective into curricula.

II. Justice

2.1 *Programs on the prison system and/or criminal proceedings*

The trend has been to implement programs that promote the overall development of prisoners in the fields of health, reintegration into the labor force, education, housing, reproductive

and sexual rights, culture, and recreation. Of special note are the measures taken by Colombia, El Salvador, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Argentina has implemented a program on the maintenance of healthy prisons. For their part, El Salvador, Argentina, and Panama are conducting programs for training prison staff in the human rights of women and in gender-related issues. Uruguay and Venezuela reported on programs for facilitating contact between women prisoners and their minor children. In the area of legislation, Nicaragua and Panama reported on the enactment of laws on the prison system to promote mainstreaming of the gender perspective.

2.2 *Programs against violence*

Some countries reported on the preparation and implementation of programs for the eradication of gender-related violence focused mainly on cultural patterns, legal assistance, and the training of forensic experts and police and judicial personnel. Canada has promoted public awareness of the identification of factors of violence and the role citizens can play in responding to this problem. Through this type of federal initiative, it is endeavoring to strengthen criminal justice, provide shelter and health care systems, and make supporting data, research, and evaluation findings available in order to achieve effective interventions.

Moreover, in Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, institutional mechanisms have been established to address and eradicate the problem of violence through police stations for women and the family; special courts for prosecuting cases involving acts of violence; offices for gender-related issues; domestic violence and sexual offence units or networks that provide information and counseling to victims; and offices of national coordinators.

2.3 *Programs to provide training in the gender perspective in the judicial system*

It should be noted that Costa Rica and Nicaragua reported on the establishment of a gender secretariat within the judicial structure and the creation of a high-level gender commission consisting of Supreme Court justices, and on the creation of a gender commission within its Supreme Court of Justice.

Generally speaking, programs have been introduced to educate and train officials of the judicial and legislative branches and of the Office of the Public Prosecutor in the gender perspective with a view to eliminating gender discrimination in judicial decisions and to review the working conditions of women in the judicial system. Colombia is conducting a training program for judicial branch personnel and two training workshops on gender perspective in order to launch the creation of a teacher network. Likewise, Venezuela is holding workshops on the applicability of the Law on Violence against Women and the human rights of women, for staff working in agencies that receive complaints. Costa Rica has installed a mechanism that provides individual attention and guidance and studies the employment conditions of women working in the judicial system. It is also working on a program designed to guarantee equal opportunity and non-gender-based discrimination in court judgments. El Salvador and Panama are promoting the adoption of this type of program within the judicial branch and the attorney general's office is doing so at the decision-making and operational levels.

For its part, Mexico is the only country that has reported on the development of a program in the legislative branch. The Dominican Republic, in addition to promoting this type of program in the

administration of justice, the attorney general's office, and the national police, prepared a training manual for judges entitled *Notas para una Jurisprudencia hacia la igualdad* (Notes for a Jurisprudence Aimed at Equality), which is used for individuals wishing to become justices of the peace.

El Salvador, Guyana, Uruguay, and Venezuela are developing measures to incorporate the gender perspective and human rights into law school curricula.

2.4 *Programs for preventing and combating trafficking in persons*

The Dominican Republican reported, as a good practice, the enactment of laws and the adoption of programs on the illicit trafficking in immigrants and trafficking in persons. The law makes it compulsory to implement public policy in the areas of migration and trafficking in persons.

2.5 *Advances in the field of legislation*

Significant progress has been reported in two areas of legislation. Costa Rica has adopted a law on responsible fatherhood, which lays down procedures for expediting the process for determining the paternity of children born out of wedlock, by providing for a government agency to conduct a free comparative study of genetic markers. The agency is required to maintain custody of the proof and to report the results to the registry of births, marriages, and deaths. The second area of progress is the legal implementation of a mechanism for the monitoring of gender policies developed by Bolivia with the participation of government bodies and civil society.

III. Employment

3.1 *Programs for the direct creation of jobs*

Nicaragua reported on the creation of temporary public sector jobs with payment in kind, such as in food supplies.

3.2 *Job training programs*

Some countries reported on the organization of national programs and workshops on job training from the gender perspective, such as national business training programs for women, like the one carried out by Colombia, whose purpose is to create a national platform for training women in business. El Salvador has training programs for personnel of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare; and Uruguay has training programs for women experiencing difficulties in entering the job market. Guatemala implemented a program on analytical systems for professionals in the Department of Labor. In addition, it is conducting gender-based training workshops on respect for labor-related rights and obligations for female workers and employers. Also worthy of note is the institutional mechanism developed by Nicaragua aimed at developing a streamlined process to mainstream gender equity into agricultural production. Nicaragua has also implemented an adult vocational training program.

3.3 *Public service employment programs*

Nicaragua introduced a public service employment program, through its Ministry of Labor, which acts as an intermediary between unemployed persons and companies to promote the insertion of men and women into the labor force.

3.4 *Programs to promote gender equity in public employment policies*

Many countries reported on the creation of programs and institutional mechanisms to promote gender equality and job creation for women. Reference is made to the tripartite commissions established in Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay to deal with issues related to the labor rights of women.

Venezuela reported on the creation of the Women's Development Bank (BANMUJER) and development funds to make credit available to women in poverty.

Colombia has implemented a program to support women heads of household and a program to monitor gender issues, which strengthens existing norms and promotes their observance.

Costa Rica has developed the program *Creciendo Juntos y Construyendo Oportunidades* (Growing Together and Creating Opportunities), which fosters the insertion into the workplace of adult women, pregnant teenagers, and mothers living in poverty. It is important to note that El Salvador introduced a national model labor law with a gender perspective aimed at improving the status and position of women in the labor market by promoting respect for their rights. The model law was drawn up by the Salvadorian Institute for the Development of Women and the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.

3.5 *Legislation*

In the area of legislation, countries have reported on changes that have taken place during this decade in their national political constitutions to promote the incorporation into national law of international conventions on the elimination of discrimination against women. Countries have also reported on specific quota laws that provide for a minimum percentage of women in leadership positions in trade unions and in decision-making bodies. Initiatives have also been reported to adopt laws on the labor rights of women during pregnancy and breastfeeding and on labor rights governing pay. In particular, Guatemala adopted a law that criminalizes discrimination in this regard.

3.6 *Programs to ensure equality between female domestic and rural workers*

Argentina has implemented a program with a gender-training component for teaching literacy to female rural and domestic workers. Other countries have reported on substantive laws that regulate these activities. El Salvador reported that the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare has created offices in duty-free zones and customs-clearance areas to monitor the behavior of the labor market and has paid special attention to women in the productive process.

3.7 *Programs to combat sexual harassment*

Countries have reported on criminal legislation that defines acts of sexual harassment as crimes and provides for their punishment. El Salvador reported on the existence of an internal law on discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace in the Salvadorian Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources. Argentina and Paraguay have conducted national campaigns against sexual harassment in the workplace, identifying the various forms of violence perpetrated against women.