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REPORT OF THE RAPPORTEUR OF THE DIALOGUE OF HEADS OF DELEGATION

1. Introduction

In my capacity as Rapporteur of the Dialogue of Heads of Delegation I am honored to present this report on the Dialogue of Heads of Delegations at the Thirty-third Assembly of Delegates of the Inter-American Commission of Women.

2. Heads of Delegation

The following delegates participated in the Dialogue of Heads of Delegations:[1/]

Mexico	María del Rocío García Gaitán
Nicaragua	María Robleto
Panama	Rina Rodríguez
Paraguay	Gloria Godoy de Rubín
Peru	Hugo Otero
St. Kitts and Nevis	Ingrid Charles Gumbs
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Rosita Snagg
Surinam	Chitrawatie Mohanlan
Trinidad and Tobago	Monica Williams
Uruguay	Carmen Beramendi
Venezuela	Elida Aponte
Antigua Barbuda	Jacqui Quinn-Leandro
Argentina	Magdalena Faillace
Bahamas	Loretta Butler-Turner
Barbados	Irene Sandford-Gardner
Belize	Anne-Marie Williams
Bolivia	Martha Evelyn Agreda Rodríguez
Brazil	Nilcéa Freire
Canada	Clare Beckton

1. Listed in accordance with the order of precedence established in the first plenary session of the Assembly.

Chile	Laura Albornoz
Colombia	Martha Lucía Vázquez Zawadzky
Costa Rica	Jeannette Carrillo Madrigal
Ecuador	Ana Lucía Herrera Aguirre
El Salvador	Karla Vanessa Lemus Reyes
United States of America	Wanda K. Jones
Grenada	Glynis Roberts
Guatemala	Sonia Escobedo
Guyana	Pauline Sukhai
Haiti	Anne Marie Coriolan
Honduras	Doris García
Jamaica	Faith Webster

3. Authorities

In accordance with Article 25 of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly of Delegates, the Principal Delegate of Chile was named President of the Dialogue of Heads of Delegations. The First Vice-President of the Assembly acted as Vice President.

4. Dialogue Topic

The Dialogue of Heads of Delegation focused on the topics, "Gender-based Violence, HIV, and trafficking in women and children," "Climate Change – Natural Disasters," and "Gender and Justice."

5. Sessions for the Dialogue of Heads of Delegation

The Dialogue of Heads of Delegation held three sessions.

i. First plenary session

The President declared the Dialogue open at 4.00 p.m. on Monday, November 10, 2008, opening the session with an examination of the first topic, "Gender-based violence, HIV, and trafficking in women and children." She explained that guest experts would introduce the topics in order to launch the dialogue.

The Delegates heard presentations by two guest speakers, Fernanda Lopes from the Program for Reproductive Health and Rights of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Brazil, and Soledad Larraín, a Chilean researcher and teacher who is an expert on gender-based violence and currently a consultant with UNICEF.

Mrs. Lopes discussed the worldwide statistics on HIV broken down according to each country. She described the increasing feminization of the epidemic and pointed out that 96% of new infections are occurring in countries in the middle to low economic brackets, and that cultural and income inequalities contribute to an increase of infectious diseases in those countries. In the

Americas, half of all new cases are women. She showed that as regards women and HIV, a series of factors such as gender inequality, poverty, social stigma, and violence against women all impact on the situation of women and create a many layered situation of vulnerability.

She pointed out that in order to promote equitable development the needs of all groups must be identified and that to date strategies had not been devised that differentiate between the needs of men and women in this area. She also underlined the importance of involving the women's movement and other groups working on the issue, including groups of indigenous women and other subgroups. Amongst her recommendations she included the importance of working with men on all aspects of sexual and reproductive health, and to make them more aware of HIV prevention and the use of condoms.

Mrs. Larraín, however, approached the issue of violence from the point of view of the multiplicity of its presentations, including intrafamily violence, femicide, and trafficking in persons and described how important it has been for the Region that the Convention of Belém do Pará has been adopted. On the subject of trafficking in persons and the implications of this in a globalized world, she pointed out that many countries have still not passed legislation on trafficking in persons and she underlined the need to promote coordination between countries at both bilateral and multilateral levels, as well as the need for cross frontier coordination. She referred to the need to mainstream a gender perspective throughout legislation in general and policies in particular, with a human rights focus as well as to promote the empowerment and political participation of women. She described the need for comparative studies for the Region in order to evaluate the impact of these policies and said how important it was to have a policy of sufficient investment in order to prevent violence. Finally, she underlined the importance for the fight against gender-based violence of strengthening the links between the state and civil society.

The delegations took the floor in order to comment on the presentations. These interventions covered the following issues:

- The use of the Convention of Belém do Pará to prevent the deportation of a woman who was the victim of violence in her country of origin (Costa Rica).
- The vulnerability of young women to gender-based violence and HIV, early pregnancy, and the importance of continuing to provide education for school children who become mothers.
- The links between trafficking in women and drug and arms trafficking.
- The importance of maintaining a multisectoral approach to dealing with gender-based violence and of having access to an integrated information system on the issue.
- The need to build a common front against the price of HIV medication and the difficulties encountered in obtaining generic drugs.
- The need to include men in the dialogue on violence, HIV, and empowerment.

The session concluded at 5.45 p.m.

ii. Second Session of the Dialogue of Heads of Delegation

The President opened the second session of the Dialogue on "Climate Change and Natural Disasters," at 9.00 a.m. on November 11, 2008. She explained that Alicia Bárcenas, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, would address the floor and describe the new approach to gender being developed in the United Nations.

Speakers Ana Lya Uriarte Rodríguez, Minister Chairperson of the National Commission for the Environment of Chile, and Elizabeth Riley, Acting Assistant Coordinator for Technical Programming of CDERA, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency, both made presentations on the subject of gender, natural disasters, and climate change.

Mrs. Iriarte Rodríguez opened the subject. She stated that natural disasters mostly affect lower income groups, and within these groups, mainly affect women who are also more vulnerable again because they are women. She said that for each man who dies in a natural disaster, between three and five women die, and she took as an example Bangladesh where 90% of the 140,000 who died in 1991 were women. Women are much more vulnerable because of their subordinate position in the family which is due to traditional, patriarchal cultural values. Apart from natural disasters, they often face gender-based violence and exploitation. She referred to the Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction (2005) in which the need was emphasized to mainstream a gender perspective across all the decision-making processes for disaster management and which lead to the preparation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, however she pointed out that unfortunately the gender issue has continued to be excluded from the debate concerning the processes for negotiating climate change. Women are often excluded from planning responses to disasters and this implies that their needs are not being adequately addressed. She recommends strengthening the capacity of groups and womens' organizations, ensuring that the issue of gender is mainstreamed throughout all communications, education and training, and ensuring the participation of and opportunities for women in science and technology, increasing financing and following an agenda designed to reduce the specific gender risk.

Mrs. Elizabeth Riley then made her presentation. She briefly described her organization whose main purpose is to make immediate and coordinated response to disasters in the sixteen countries in the Caribbean. She presented statistics on the impact of natural disasters and climate change in the Region. She explained that both climate change and natural disasters are development issues and that the impact of climate change varies from community to community because it feeds off existing vulnerabilities. She showed how the differentiated vulnerabilities of men and women to natural disasters reflect their gender roles. Women tend to have limited access to resources such as lines of credit, extension services, information, and technology. Their mobility is limited because of their responsibilities in the home, and they rarely have access to land ownership, and training. There are other areas of inequality such as their limited participation in leadership structures and in the decision-making process, and in the unequal status accorded women's work. Mrs. Riley's recommendations include mainstreaming gender across national policies, plans, and legislation, including those concerning sustainable development and climate change; ensuring a gender perspective in the information needed for decision making, flexible financial mechanisms in order to respond to the needs and priorities of women.

The President thanked the speakers for their presentations and opened the floor to the Delegates.

The Delegate of Colombia spoke first and expressed her concern that the topics being discussed in this hall should feed into the deliberations of the General Committee which were taking place in an adjoining room. She therefore suggested that, in order to avoid dichotomies of this sort, the Biennial Work Plan should be discussed in this room by the Heads of Delegations. Several delegations supported this proposal, including Brazil, Argentina, and Venezuela.

The President of CIM explained that as was usual practice, the draft resolutions had been produced in Washington following several meetings of the working group preparing for the Thirty-Fourth Assembly and that they would be presented once more to the Plenary Session in order to be adopted. She proposed that the discussion should conclude so that the Biennial Work Plan could be put forward.

The deliberations continued and the delegates requested the opportunity to speak and stated that in regional fora, such as MERCOSUR, the issue of gender and natural disasters had already been discussed. These fora have maintained that it is important to define priorities.

Several countries in the Caribbean spoke and described their particular vulnerability in the face of natural disasters. They emphasized the need to include women in decision making to do with disaster management and reconstruction of the affected areas. They emphasized the importance of attending to those communities that are normally located in marginal areas (disasters within disasters). It is important to have at hand statistics concerning all groups, especially vulnerable groups such as boys and girls, elderly people, and young people. It was also said that national mechanisms should be represented in civil protection and disaster management groups.

The President then opened the floor to Alicia Bárcenas, Executive Secretary of ECLAC who discussed the difficulties facing the region as a result of the worldwide economic crisis, and emphasized the importance of taking steps to ensure that women were not affected by this crisis. She pointed out that it is important to take steps to ensure that social budgets are not cut back, especially those budgets oriented towards working with women. She proposed a joint meeting between CIM-ECLAC-ILO on employment, women, and gender in order to discuss the issue of the impact of the crisis on employment for women, new categories of employment, and the economic autonomy of women, amongst others. She also referred to the new approach to gender being developed in the United Nations and explained the new structures that have been designed for this purpose. To conclude, Mrs. Bárcenas proposed that the CIM should approach the General Secretariat of the United Nations through the General Secretariat of the OAS and ask to be allowed to participate in the consultation being carried out by the United Nations regarding these new structures.

The session ended at 1.00 p.m.

iii. Third Session of the Dialogue of Heads of Delegation

The third session on the subject of Gender and Justice started at 3.30 p.m. on November 11.

The first item was a presentation by Dr. Cecilia Medina Quiroga, President of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, on the issue of Gender and Justice. Dr. Medina opened her comments by reflecting on gender as a cultural construct. The law, she said, is made of words. The law is not neutral, however much we would like it to be so. The law reflects the ideological, sentimental, and moral standpoint of whoever applies it. This is particularly evident in the area of human rights, and especially so in the area of the human rights of women. All of us, both men and women, from all our different standpoints, need human rights. And justice, in the strict sense of the word, is the last resource available to us for the exercise of those human rights. The gender bias obstructing the work of human rights organizations stems from the very structure of society itself.

It is not that we women want equal treatment, rather we want to be treated with equal respect, and equal respect means respecting our differences. In order to change culture, we must stress the importance of education, and begin from infancy onwards and then continue on many fronts simultaneously. We must grasp the idea that we, both men and women, are the State, and must learn to use the law that we have. We must take issue with justice in order to eradicate sexism from the law.

Dr. Medina described the power of the inter-American system of human rights and said how much it had helped to strengthen human rights in the region. She also underlined the need for the CIM to use the consultation mechanism of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in order to resolve situations occurring in different countries.

Following Dr. Medina's presentation, the President took the floor in order to comment on the topic under debate. She commented on the situation of women who have been deprived of their freedom, as well as on the mistaken concept of the neutrality of laws, which was the subject of discussion in the recent Meeting of Magistrates held recently in Guatemala.

The Delegates then took the floor and made the following observations:

- Universities should include a gender perspective in their curricula, in all professional qualifications, and especially, in Law Faculties, in order to raise the levels of consciousness and awareness and to professionally train future graduates, both male and female.
- The importance was stressed of overcoming positivist or formulaic paradigms, while including a gender paradigm and acknowledging the contribution to be made by feminist legal theory.
- Reference was made to the problem of impunity and the denial of justice to women implicit in the issue of Gender-based Violence.
- Special significance was accorded to feminist organizations for their ability to support victims, observe justice, and for achieving the changes proposed in this area.

The President then invited all the Delegates to review the Biennial Work Plan of the CIM 2008-2010. Several proposals were made to reduce this and to reorganize the topics and these were discussed at length and in great detail. Agreement was reached on the guidelines for the Biennial Plan and it was agreed that the Executive Committee in their first regular session would establish the actions and strategies to be followed for its implementation.

The Dialogue of Delegation Heads concluded at 8.00 p.m.

I would like to express my thanks to Martha Beltrán-Martínez from the Commission Secretariat, for her invaluable help and assistance in the production of this report.

Elida Aponte Sánchez
Alternate Delegate of Venezuela