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PROGRAMMING GUIDELINES

TWO-YEAR WORK PROGRAM FOR THE CIM

Dialogue of Heads of Delegation

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I. INTRODUCTION

In 1994, the Assembly of Delegates of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) approved the Strategic Plan of Action for the CIM, which was presented to the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. Under this Plan, strategies were suggested to guarantee and reinforce the role of women up to the year 2000. The Plan acknowledges the importance of the ten topics included in it and gives priority to the following areas for the five-year period: women's participation in power and decision-making structures; education; the elimination of violence; and the eradication of poverty.

In that same year, the Summit of the Americas was held, at which the elected heads of state and government of the Americas approved a Declaration of Principles. To promote the general objectives outlined in that Declaration, they pledged to develop a Plan of Action adopted for that purpose. Chapter III of that Plan, entitled Eradication of Poverty and Discrimination in our Hemisphere, refers to Topic 18 on strengthening the role of women in society and underscores the need to strengthen policies and programs to improve and expand women's participation in all spheres of political, social, and economic life and to improve their access to the basic resources required for the full exercise of their fundamental rights. The chapter also specifically states that the Inter-American Commission of Women should be further strengthened.

In 1996, the Summit of the Americas on Sustainable Development was held in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, and the Declaration of Santa Cruz de la Sierra and the Plan of Action for the Sustainable Development of the Americas were approved on that occasion.

In the course of 1998, events of special importance for the CIM took place. The first occurred in February. As the key event in the commemoration of its 70th anniversary, the CIM organized an Inter-American Consultative Meeting on "The Participation of Women in Power and Decision-Making Structures," where it adopted a Plan of Action for the entire Hemisphere.

In April, the Second Summit of the Americas was held in Santiago, Chile, and specific mandates for the OAS were established there. It mandated the General Secretariat with the task of providing documentary and technical support services to the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), and focused on promotion of activities in the areas of education, democracy and human rights, and social and human development.

In June, the twentieth-eighth regular session of the OAS, following the initiatives of the Second Summit of the Americas, also adopted mandates for support and follow-up activities, and instructed the organs, agencies, and entities of the inter-American system to give priority to the initiatives set forth in the Santiago Plan of Action. At the same time, based on the provisions of the OAS Charter and in view of the mandates of the Santiago Declaration, guidelines were issued to initiate a process of strengthening and modernizing the institutions in the Hemisphere, and especially

the OAS. Mandates on the status of women in the Americas and on strengthening the CIM, the OAS, and civil society were also adopted.

II. ANALYSIS

The mandates arising from the previously described two-year plans, and others that were subsequently approved, have been used as a basis for planning the CIM's activities and will be used to guide the CIM's programming exercise for the next biennium.

The CIM will also carry out activities in cooperation with other organizations in the inter-American system, whenever possible. It will do the same with entities within the Organization itself, an arrangement that has been facilitated by resolution AG/RES. 1422 (XXVI-O/96), entitled "Cooperation within the Inter-American System to Ensure Full and Equal Participation by Women in the Development Process."

In accordance with the budget regulations governing the OAS General Secretariat, the proposed program-budget for the CIM is prepared by the Permanent Secretariat and then presented to the Executive Committee, for its approval. In view of the fact that budget appropriations from the Organization's Regular Fund have been steadily declining in recent years, in 1986 CIM was asked to reallocate its resources to multinational activities so that it could serve a larger number of member states. CIM's financial allocations for the next few years are modest, and so it will endeavor to fulfill its objectives by identifying sources of financing outside the OAS.

III. GENERAL CRITERIA

The Plans of Action approved by the CIM (the 1994 Strategic Plan and the 1998 Plan of Action on "Participation of Women in Power and Decision-Making Structures"), and the Plans approved by both Summits of the Americas suggest common priority areas of interest. These areas should form the core of the two-year work program for the 1998-2000 biennium, so that results can be maximized and the program can be adjusted to the economic resources available.

Special account will be taken of the proposals that are made by the Twenty-ninth Assembly of Delegates, during the Dialogue of Heads of Delegation.

The CIM will continue to channel its efforts to projects that are regional in scope and fall within the areas identified as priorities. It will also focus on activities with a potential multiplier effect, so that the results will be more likely to have a social impact.

It will pursue its efforts to strengthen its relationship with other entities in the inter-American system and within the OAS.

The new officers of the CIM will have to evaluate proposals realistically, so as to avoid creating expectations that could be frustrated if the additional contributions and external funds required are not obtained.

The Permanent Secretariat will continue to provide technical support from headquarters to the principal delegates to further their activities in member countries, and will continue with distribution of the Seed Fund. It will assist in developing and formulating projects, and in identifying outside sources of financing.

IV. PRIORITIES FOR THE BIENNIUM

STRENGTHENING OF THE CIM

“Further Strengthening of the Inter-American Commission of Women” (Chapter III, Topic 18, First Summit of the Americas, 1994)

High priority has been assigned to strengthening the CIM during this biennium. As part of the mandates of the OAS and the Summit of the Americas, objectives which the CIM is expected to carry out were set in the area of women’s affairs. Within this framework, the strategies contained in the document “Strengthening the Inter-American Commission of Women” (CIM/doc.42/98) will be implemented, and an effort will be made to promote the image of the CIM in the Hemisphere. The CIM will proceed in accordance with the mandates of the Assembly of Delegates, bearing in mind information contained in the document "Operations Plan for Strengthening the CIM" (CIM/doc.50/98).

EDUCATION

“... We will redouble our efforts to continue reforms designed to improve the living conditions of the peoples of the Americas and to achieve a mutually supportive community. For this reason, we have decided that education is a key theme and is of particular importance in our deliberations.” (Declaration of Santiago, Second Summit of the Americas)

Gender-sensitive education is the way to form new values and to change attitudes. It is also essential for guaranteeing the full exercise of the rights of women, with a view to including them in all levels of the political arena, ensuring that they enter and remain on the labor market, and improving their standard of living. The mandates that the CIM intends to fulfill in this area are directed to promoting educational reform based on the principles of gender equity and nondiscrimination, which entail building relations of equality and solidarity between men and women. It is essential to bring about socio-cultural changes and eliminate stereotypes based on domestic and work roles in education, to create an awareness that men and women should share tasks in both the public and the private sphere. Furthermore, it is necessary to encourage training programs geared to educationally disadvantaged groups, such as minorities, people living in rural areas, marginal urban sectors, indigenous women, and ethnic groups.

ERADICATION OF POVERTY

“There is an urgent need to intensify efforts to reduce the poverty and the marginalization which broadly affect our societies, and especially women and children.” (Declaration of the Summit of the Americas on Sustainable Development)

In this area, the revision of laws and social and labor policies that will bring about social reform with a gender perspective will be fostered. It is important for women to have access to land, financial services, and/or credit programs. It is also important for activities aimed at female owners of microenterprises to be launched and to promote their access to technology and information. Emphasis will be placed on health care for women in all stages of life, and priority will be given to food security, especially during pregnancy and lactation.

ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE

“...violence against women constitutes a violation of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, and impairs or nullifies the observance, enjoyment and exercise of such rights and freedoms” (Convention of Belém do Pará)

Adoption of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women “Convention of Belém do Pará,” marked the start of a process for the CIM aimed at ensuring its universal signature and ratification and the eradication of violence in this Hemisphere. The process of ratification of the Convention has moved forward, and is close to achieving its objective, since 28 countries have already ratified it. The same is not true of the elimination of violence. Substantial progress has been achieved in this area, but levels of violence throughout the Hemisphere are still high enough to justify and call for priority attention. Therefore, all the inter-American forums where this subject has been addressed have emphasized the need to continue developing a policy designed to prevent and eradicate such violence.

The CIM, which has taken the lead in this area, will continue to seek resources and to promote the Convention and the implementation of specific measures designed to achieve legal reforms to guarantee that women may live free of violence, in both the public and the private arenas. It will foster support services for women who have been the victims of violence in the member states. It will promote the compiling of statistics on the subject, which will make it possible to pinpoint the scope of the problem and to design strategies to solve it. As for prevention of violence, it is suggested that informative material be prepared and disseminated at all levels of education.

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURES

“The integration of women into the full range of the decision-making process, including the highest levels of power in the state, is the only means to attain full participation in the development process, their status of equality vis-à-vis society, and their contribution to social peace and the enjoyment of that status.” (CIM’s Strategic Plan of Action)

In compliance with the mandates of the Twenty-eighth Assembly of Delegates, the CIM held an Inter-American Consultative Meeting on “The Participation of Women in Power and Decision-Making Structures.” With the participation of experts from all parts of the Hemisphere, regional diagnoses and proposals were drawn up, which formed the basis of a Plan of Action (CIM/doc.39/98)

with specific strategies for the CIM. As many measures as possible will be implemented during the coming biennium.

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