

Biennial Work Program of the CIM 2002-2004 Program Guidelines

I. INTRODUCTION

The 2000-2002 biennium has been highly productive in terms of initiatives on gender issues and women's human rights, especially within the context of the Inter-American Program on Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality (IAP). As a result, the Biennial Work Program of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) for the biennium 2002-2004 will include proposals to further the IAP's implementation hemispherically and to expand its reach and scope. The plan will additionally take into account areas of common interest and the realistic possibilities for the implementation of these initiatives.

Since its approval in April 2000 by the First Meeting of Ministers or Highest-Ranking Authorities Responsible for the Advancement of Women in the Member States, and by the OAS General Assembly (2000), the IAP has laid out the blueprint for the inclusion of a gender perspective in all hemispheric policies and programs. The Program clearly identifies an action agenda for the governments, for the OAS, and for the CIM and has become a guiding force for CIM's programs, policies and initiatives. In addition, and as a direct result of the Meeting of Ministers, the IAP was endorsed by the Heads of State at the 2001 Quebec Summit of the Americas as an effective tool for mainstreaming gender in all hemispheric policies and programs.

The Strategic Plan of Action of the CIM, adopted in 1994 by the Assembly of Delegates of the CIM and presented in 1995 to the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women, also proposed the development of strategies to ensure and strengthen the role of women until 2000. The CIM Strategic Plan recognizes the importance of the ten issues it identifies and discusses, and assigns priorities for the five-year plan for women's participation in power and decision-making structures, education, elimination of violence, and eradication of poverty. Recognizing the relevancy of its priorities, the Thirtieth CIM Assembly of Delegates considered the need to have the Strategic Plan of Action remain in effect until 2005 and mandated that the CIM continue to implement the strategies proposed therein until that time.

The commitments undertaken in the aforementioned plans and programs, and others adopted in preceding biennia, have served as the basis for planning CIM activities and will guide its programming for the next biennium.

II. GENERAL CRITERIA

The Plans of Action adopted by the CIM (the Strategic Plan of Action of 1994 and the Plan of Action on Women's Participation in Power and Decision-Making Structures of 1998), the Inter-American Program on the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality of 2000, and the Plan of Action adopted by the Quebec Summit of the Americas, 2001, suggest common priority areas. In light of existing human and financial resources available to the CIM, these programs are to serve as the driving force for the work program for the 2002 – 2004 biennium.

The CIM will continue to direct its efforts toward tasks of regional scope within the priority areas identified. In order to obtain results with the greatest potential for impact on

society, it will concentrate on those efforts having a multiplier effect. CIM will also continue to strengthen its relations with other agencies of the inter-American system, organs and organizations of the OAS, with other international organizations and with civil society organizations.

However, unless additional financial and external resources are obtained, the officers of the CIM for the 2002-2004 biennium will have to evaluate proposals realistically so as to avoid creating false expectations. In view of the fact that budgetary appropriations from the Regular Fund of the OAS have been steadily declining, including a reduction for 2003 to the Seed Fund, the CIM's financial resources for the next biennium are limited, and therefore an attempt will be made to ensure that its objectives are met by identifying external resources, as has been done during this biennium. The Permanent Secretariat will also seek out and encourage the increased participation of the CIM delegates to ensure maximum impact in the region within the scope of limited resources.

The Permanent Secretariat will continue to provide technical support from CIM headquarters to the Principal Delegates to further the activities of the member states, and will continue distribution of the Seed Fund, limited as it is, which will give preference to fulfillment of the objectives established in the Inter-American Program. It will assist in formulating and developing projects and in identifying external sources of funding.

III. PRIORITIES FOR THE BIENNIUM

1. The Inter-American Program for the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality – An Action Agenda

With the Member States:

Since the CIM has obtained such positive results from the process developed to implement the Inter-American Program (SEPIA I: Gender and Labor and SEPIA II: Gender and Justice), it will, as mandated, continue to mainstream gender through the particular avenue of the Ministerials. Contingent upon the receipt of the necessary resources for the 2002-2004 biennium, the CIM will focus on the area of Education, and in follow-up to the Ministries of Labor and Justice to ensure the implementation of the recommendation. In addition, and in collaboration with the Principal Delegates, CIM will also direct its available resources, such as the Seed Fund and any external funds, toward the development of activities that promote the incorporation of the gender perspective in programs and activities that implement the Inter-American Program on the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality.

Within the OAS:

In fulfillment of the Program's general objectives "to systematically integrate a gender perspective in all organs, organizations, and entities of the inter-American system", the CIM, in its capacity as the specialized women's organization, will collaborate with the General Secretariat to create an awareness of, and thus incorporate a gender perspective in all of its activities and/or programs. With financial support and technical assistance received from the Canadian International Development Agency, all OAS professional program, policy and field staff will receive training in gender mainstreaming to ensure that all programs and policies emanating from the OAS include a gender perspective.

Strengthening of the CIM:

The Inter-American Program recommends the strengthening of the CIM Permanent Secretariat's technical, human and financial resources as a necessary means to enable it to promote pertinent initiatives designed to implement the objectives of the IAP, and its appropriate follow-up. This particular point must be emphatically stressed, since the financial situation of the OAS has prompted a hiring freeze, a change in the regulations for the hiring of independent contractors and a further cut to the CIM budget. This financial situation will have a detrimental effect on the ability of the CIM to perform its functions and fulfill its mandates.

With civil society:

In compliance with the mandates received from the OAS General Assembly, the Summits of the Americas, the CIM Assembly of Delegates and the Inter-American Program, the CIM will continue the process of integrating civil society organizations into CIM activities and will encourage their accreditation by the OAS so as to promote their participation in the inter-American system. CIM will continue to work in partnership with civil society experts in gender to attain the goals of the IAP. In addition, the CIM will enhance the CIM website so that it will become a repository for information on gender that will be available to civil society organizations, and will continue in the development of a database of civil society organizations that will be placed on the CIM website.

2. *Follow-up to the 2001 Quebec Summit of the Americas*

The CIM played an active role in the preparatory work for the III Summit of the Americas, held in Quebec, Canada in April 2001. As technical advisor on gender issues for the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), and pursuant to the mandates of the Thirtieth Assembly of Delegates, the CIM submitted the recommendations of the Assembly of Delegates for integrating a gender perspective into the Declaration and Plan of Action of Third Summit to the SIRG.

These recommendations were taken into account. The Summit Plan of Action contains a section on Women's Human Rights, a chapter on Gender Equality, and uses a gender mainstreaming approach in the areas of Labor and Employment, Civil Society, Health, Justice and Indigenous People. It endorses the Inter-American Program on Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality (IAP), calling for "the integration of a gender perspective into the programs, actions, agendas of national and international events, to ensure that women's experiences and gender equality are an integral dimension of the design, implementation and evaluation of government and inter-American policies and programs in all spheres".

At present, the CIM is in the process of implementing Summit mandates as indicated in CIM/doc.04/02. The Plan of Action addresses the same issues as CIM's Strategic Plan of Action and the Inter-American Program, so the activities carried out to implement it contribute toward the fulfillment of the objectives of both the Strategic Plan and the IAP. In addition, and in fulfillment of AG/RES 1741 "Integrating a Gender Perspective in the Summits of the Americas," the OAS will convene and the CIM will prepare for, and provide the technical coordination for the Second Meeting of Ministers or Highest Ranking Authorities Responsible for the Advancement of Women in the Member States to be held in 2004.

In this context, the CIM will address the issue of Women, Free Trade and Economic Integration. In collaboration with the OAS Trade Unit, and other regional mechanisms, the CIM will develop recommendations focusing on women's economic integration for consideration at this meeting. (REMIM II).

The CIM Permanent Secretariat maintains a close working relationship with the Secretariat for the Summit Process and will participate actively in the preparation for the IV Summit of the Americas, tentatively scheduled to be held in Argentina in 2004 or 2005.

3. Strategic Plan of Action of the CIM – areas for priority action

Education

Gender-sensitive education is a way to form new values and change attitudes. It is essential in guaranteeing the full exercise of women's rights with a view to including them at all levels of the political arena, allowing them to enter and remain in the labor market, and enhance their quality of life. These changes cannot be assured without the participation and support of the Ministries of Education. As with the Labor and Justice areas, the CIM, in consultation with experts in education and gender, will develop a series of recommendations on mainstreaming gender in education and will present these to the Ministries of Education. The CIM will propose recommendations whose implementation will produce and induce real social and cultural changes, eliminate stereotypes and focus attention on women's education throughout their life cycles, with special attention to training programs for educationally disadvantaged groups, such as minorities, people living in rural areas, marginal urban groups, indigenous groups, and other ethnic groups.

Eradication of poverty and discrimination

In this biennium, the CIM will continue to promote activities targeted toward women micro entrepreneurs and women's access to technology and information. Using an economic model developed by the Golda Meir International Training Institute and piloted in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the CIM will work in partnership with the CIM delegates to identify sources of funding for implementation of these types of economic growth programs.

CIM will promote research projects designed to identify discriminatory laws still in force in the member states so as to encourage their review and will endeavor to have such laws amended to incorporate the gender perspective to ensure, inter alia, women's access to land, financial services, and credit programs.

Human Rights and the Elimination of Violence against Women

Violence against Women

For the CIM, the 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 aimed at eradicating violence against women in the hemisphere and of achieving its universal signature and ratification. The process of ratifying the Convention has advanced and is very close to achieving its final objective, as 31 countries have already ratified it. Substantial progress has been achieved in this area, but levels of violence against women are still high enough in the Hemisphere to justify and call for the continuing assignment of priority attention to this topic.

In 2000, with funding received from the U.S. Agency for International Development, the CIM completed the research phase of a study designed to analyze violence against women in the Americas and to determine the impact of the "Convention of Belém do Pará", since its adoption in 1995. The study analyzed legislative measures developed in the member states, the scope and impact of national programs, and the development of programs and strategies designed to prevent, punish, and eradicate violence against women. In late 2000 and continuing through 2002, the CIM held four sub-regional meetings of experts in violence against women to present the results of the research, to analyze these results and to develop additional recommendations that will be presented to the member states. The research was analyzed, successes were shared, and deficiencies were identified. The results of the research and of the four sub-regional meetings will be shared with the CIM delegates and network of interested stakeholders. The results have already been posted on the CIM website; will be disseminated on CD-Rom, and will also be published.

In addition, and as a direct result of the sub-regional meetings, the delegates in the four sub regions have decided to form "Secretariats Pro-Tem" to continue to follow up on the implementation of the Convention of Belém do Pará.

The CIM will continue to promote the compiling of statistics on this subject, as an additional tool in identifying the scope of the problem and facilitating the design of such strategies as may be necessary to solve it.

The International Trafficking of Women and Children for Sexual Exploitation in the Americas.

With funding received from the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. Mission to the OAS, the CIM, in partnership with the Inter-American Children's Institute and DePaul University (Chicago), has completed Phase I of a research phase of this project in Central America, Brazil, Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Belize. Based on the results of the research and on the recommendations contained therein, the CIM will partner with governments, international organizations, the International Organization for Migration, and NGOs to train stakeholders (legislators, law enforcement officials, consulates, judiciary, human rights and women's rights NGOs et al.) in the development of model legislation, national plans, and education and awareness programs. CIM will actively seek funding for the delivery of these training programs. As part of a longer-term initiative, it will also seek external funding to continue research in other regions of the hemisphere.

The CIM will continue working with the Special Rapporteur on Women's Rights of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), as well as with the Commission on Human Rights, who have expressed their interest in, and support for an ongoing information exchanges with the CIM, as well as to establish a close working relationship by supporting the CIM in the area of violence against women and trafficking of women and children.

Women's participation in power and decision-making structures.

With the contribution of experts from throughout the Hemisphere, regional diagnoses and proposals were drawn up, which formed the basis for the CIM Plan of Action on Women's Participation in Power and Decision-Making Structures, with specific strategies for the CIM. As many measures as possible will be implemented during the next biennium in fulfillment of the Plan and the mandate assigned in this area in the Inter-American Program on the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality.