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English

Commission on the Status of Women

Forty-ninth session

28 February – 11 March 2005

Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century” (c) Implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: (i) Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”; (ii) Current challenges and forward looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Report of the Ninth Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean

Mexico City, 10-12 June 2004

Sciences, Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, Organization of American States and International Organization for Migration.

10. In addition, the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. On the Roster: Centre for Development and Populations Activities (CEDPA), International Right to Life Federation. In general consultative status: Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), Centro de Intercambio y Servicios Cono Sur Argentina – Red Mujer y Hábitat de América Latina (CISCA), International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network (LACWHN). In special consultative status: Action Aid, Amnesty International, Association of United Families International, Campaign Life Coalition, Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA), Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC), Research Centre for Feminist Action (CIPAF), Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán, Andean Commission of Jurists, Latin American and Caribbean Committee for Defence of Women's Rights (CLADEM), Concerned Women for America (CWA), David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC), IPAS Mexico, International Organization for the Right to Education and Freedom of Education (OIDE), Life Ethics Educational Association, National Right to Life Educational Trust, Red de Educación Popular entre Mujeres de América Latina y el Caribe (REPEM), Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, Worldwide Organization of Women's Studies (WOWS), Elige, Red de Jóvenes por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos, Igualdad Ya, Red de Mujeres Rurales de América Latina y el Caribe.

11. Other non-governmental organizations were also represented as listed below: Agencia Nacional de Telecomunicaciones (ANATEL), Articulación Feminista MARCOSUR, Articulação de Mulheres Brasileiras, Asociación de Mujeres "Mélida Anaya Montes", Asociación Civil Patronato Inca, Asociación Internacional de Abogados Jóvenes, Centro de Investigación, Capacitación y Apoyo a la Mujer, Colectivo Feminista Mujeres Universitarias de Honduras, Congress of Black Women of Canada, Consejo de Mujeres Indígenas del Ecuador, Coordinadora Política Juvenil del Ecuador, Federación de Mujeres Cubanas, Radio Internacional Feminista (FIRE), Fundación Mac Arthur, Fundación "Rigoberta Menchú", Federación Internacional de Mujeres Profesionales y de Negocios, Movimiento de Mujeres "Visitación Padilla", Mujer y Economía, Real Women of Canada, Red de Mujeres contra la Violencia, Red de Mujeres Mexicanas, Red Nacional Género y Economía de México, Red Género y Medio Ambiente de México, Red Internacional de Género y Comercio, Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación, Women's Environment and Development Organization, World Evangelical Alliance, World Vision.

12. In addition, a number of persons from academic, political and institutional circles attended the meeting as special guests.

Election of Presiding Officers

13. The Conference elected the following Presiding Officers

<u>Chairperson:</u>	Mexico
<u>Vice-Chairpersons:</u>	Netherlands Antilles
	Argentina
	Brazil
	Chile
	Colombia
	Cuba

Guatemala
Honduras
Paraguay
Puerto Rico
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Venezuela

Rapporteur Ecuador

Documentation

14. The list of working documents presented by the Secretariat to the ninth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean appears as annex 6.

Agenda

15. At its first plenary meeting, the Conference adopted the following agenda:
1. Election of presiding officers
 2. Adoption of the agenda
 3. Activities carried out by the ECLAC secretariat and the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean since the eighth session of the Regional Conference
 4. Poverty, economic autonomy and gender equity
 5. Empowerment, institution-building and gender equity
 6. Activities commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women
 7. Consideration and adoption of agreements by the Conference
 8. Other matters



II. PROCEEDINGS

Opening meeting

16. At the opening meeting, statements were made by Patricia Espinosa, President of the National Women's Institute (Inmujeres) of Mexico; José Luis Machinea, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); Luis Ernesto Derbez, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Mexico and Vicente Fox, President of Mexico.

17. The Chairperson of the Women's National Institute of Mexico stated that the World Conference on International Women's Year, held in Mexico in 1975, was a historic occasion since a series of issues were raised for the first time in an international forum: full gender equality, gender discrimination, the integration and full participation of women in development and the contribution of women to peace-building. That the ninth session of the Regional Conference should also be held in Mexico was highly significant, since it was an excellent opportunity to assess the progress made since 1975, to renew the agenda for women and to adopt new strategies for the future.

18. After almost three decades, the international agenda for women had been enhanced qualitatively and consolidated in different ways. The change in the working methodology and the integration of governmental bodies and civil society organizations had given rise to new inclusive and representative forms of exchange and dialogue, which were reflected in the composition of the delegations participating in the meeting. This period had left a further legacy: the proof that in a world of upheaval and confrontation, women, notwithstanding their differences, had been able to maintain dialogue and to continue to work together towards common objectives. At the same time, the national machineries for the advancement of women had managed to integrate public policies on empowerment and development of women as part of the strategies designed to promote equity and equal opportunities. In that context, Mexico understood and reaffirmed its commitment to the regional and international agreements, on the understanding that only through cooperation and a thorough and lasting integration of the Latin American and Caribbean nations would it be possible to eliminate the poverty and inequalities that prevailed.

19. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC thanked the Government of Mexico for its impressive welcome and for the strong support it had provided in organizing the meeting. He referred to the historical ties that Mexico had maintained with the Commission and affirmed that as the host country in 1975 for the World Conference on International Women's Year, which marked the start of the world process for the promotion of gender equity, Mexico held a particular significance for the women of the region and the world. He highlighted the role of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean as the principal intergovernmental forum for gender policies and reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to ratifying and consolidating the international agenda in the area of gender equity.

20. With respect to the Millennium Development Goals, he said that meeting the gender equality goal was a vital requirement for all member States. Valuable advances had been made in the region in recent years, particularly in institutional and legal spheres, but a commitment on the part of Governments, civil society and international organizations was necessary in order to strengthen the political and financial dimensions of the existing institutional framework. Most forms of gender-based discrimination still persisted and, as such, a conformist stance was to be avoided. Further efforts should be made in the area of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

21. The Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico recalled that 30 years had past since the World Conference in 1975, during which period the issue of gender equity had gained currency on the political agenda of the countries in the region. However, persistent poverty, violence, marginalization, trafficking in persons and armed conflicts meant that women were still unable to fully exercise their rights and the unfortunate situation in Latin America and the Caribbean defied a solution. Hence the relevance of the meeting convened by ECLAC and the importance of the set of initiatives adopted by the international community, which, without gender equity, would not only lack efficiency but also meaning.

22. He said that the make-up of the delegations at the meeting reflected the vital importance attached to the issue of gender equity by the Governments, as well as the relevance and timeliness of the topics selected for the debates to be held during the Conference.

23. The President of Mexico welcomed the delegations and the international organizations represented at the meeting and said that it was an honour for his country to host the Conference. The international organizations, and particularly ECLAC, recognized that the future of Latin America and the Caribbean was closely linked to the development of women and to the full realization of their rights. In his opinion, regional policies in the sphere of gender equity needed to be promoted and the work of ECLAC would enable the countries to focus on attaining the Millennium Development Goals –goals that the Government of Mexico had undertaken as indicators of its own performance– evidencing its commitment and dedication to the development model.

24. The document presented at the Conference identified significant accomplishments made by every country of the region. Nevertheless a number of pending challenges remained to be addressed. Women were still unable to exercise their rights fully and suffered more acutely than men the consequences of economic and social problems. Resolving those challenges represented a long-standing commitment for Governments, institutions and civil society in democratic countries. Mexico was determined to fulfil that commitment and to add its efforts to those undertaken at the regional level. In conclusion, he recognized the efforts to reveal the true situation of women and improve their living conditions. He encouraged those present to continue to build consensus and urged ECLAC countries to continue to address the outstanding challenges together, based on the conviction that gender equity is an essential factor in consolidating democracy.

Homage to the women who participated in the World Conference on International Women's Year, held in Mexico City in 1975

25. In this ceremony, statements were made by Carolyn Hannan, Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Aída González, member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Patricia Espinosa, President of the National Women's Institute of Mexico, Carmen Borroso, Regional Director of the International Planned Parenthood Federation and Marta Sahagún, First Lady of Mexico.

26. The participants underscored the importance of the Conference of 1975 and paid homage to its participants and to the many other women who suffered and continued to suffer the effects of gender discrimination. By initiating an international dialogue and establishing specific commitments, the perspective opened up at this conference continued to serve as a guide for women. They drew attention to the main advances achieved at that forum including the establishment of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). At the regional level, the convening of the Regional Conference and the

subsequent establishment of the Women and Development Unit within ECLAC had been equally important advances in that they provided an underpinning for the efforts to achieve gender equality.

Presentation of national reports

27. Activity reports were presented by 24 member States and associate members of the Commission: Anguilla, Netherlands Antilles, Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela.

28. In their presentations, the delegations described the gender-based social and sectoral programmes that had been developed since the eighth session of the Conference. They also described ongoing and future government initiatives to improve legislation, broaden and consolidate gender institutions and promote the participation of women and their presence in terms of percentages and level of representation within public authorities and State administration, in order to guarantee the legitimacy and representativeness of the political systems in force.

Activities carried out by the ECLAC secretariat and the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean since the eighth session of the Regional Conference (agenda item 3)

29. The representative of Peru, speaking on behalf of the outgoing Chairperson of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference, said that major progress had been made since the eighth session of the Conference, including the reaffirmation of international commitments on women's rights; advances in national legislation on women's rights in relation to work, health and political and social participation; the establishment of national machineries for the advancement of women; and the application of quota policies in most countries, with the result that women's political participation had increased visibly. However, there were still a number of outstanding challenges, such as the need to strengthen national machineries for women, to effectively mainstream the gender perspective in public policies, to ensure that economic development policies incorporated equal opportunity and to include women in social protection systems on a non-discriminatory basis. Some countries had made progress in the area of gender statistics, although much remained to be done in that regard. Relations with the communications media should be strengthened with a view to fostering a culture of equal opportunity and democratic relations, both within the family and in society as a whole. Countries' ability to meet those challenges depended primarily on the political will of Governments, the legitimacy of national machineries responsible for those issues and the degree to which the State worked with civil society in addressing them.

30. The Chief of the Women and Development Unit introduced the report on the activities carried out by the ECLAC secretariat to support the integration of a gender perspective into the economic and social development of Latin America and the Caribbean.² She referred to the activities in follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action and the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, projects, technical assistance and gender mainstreaming in the work of ECLAC. In connection with the first point, she drew attention to the meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Conference, experts and United Nations agencies, which had focused on the mandates contained in the Lima Consensus. One section of the document described the projects and technical assistance carried out by the Unit on issues such as labour policies, the development of gender indicators and democratic governance with gender equity. Another section outlined the progress made with respect to gender

² See LC/L.2083(CRM.9/4) and addendum 1.

mainstreaming in the different divisions of the Commission itself. Lastly, the document addressed the relevant activities of the ECLAC subregional headquarters in Mexico and the addendum of the report concerned the activities of the subregional headquarters for the Caribbean.

31. The secretariat presented the ECLAC document "*Roads toward gender equity in Latin America and the Caribbean*". The Chief of the Women and Development Unit said that the document was the fruit of an interesting process of dialogue and participation; it had developed from requests of the member States of the Commission and had been enhanced by substantive contributions from the national machineries for women, international bodies concerned and academics who had supported the work of the Unit during the research period. That accounted for the open character of the document both in terms of design and in terms of methodology and content.

32. Given that characteristic of the document, its main advantage stemmed precisely from its comparative dimension, designed so that the countries could have regional and national points of reference which would enable them to assess both the achievements and the outstanding challenges. On the other hand, one disadvantage was that in some cases, it did not accurately reflect the high degree of heterogeneity and diversity underlying the national averages. The idea was not to give an exact picture of the status of the countries in terms of gender equity but rather to provide a regional analytical framework whose relevance as a working tool for Governments would be tested in the future.

33. In response to the presentation, comments were made by the following countries: Mexico, Chile, Dominican Republic, Suriname, Cuba, Ecuador, Honduras, Venezuela, Argentina, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Anguilla, Peru, United Kingdom, Bolivia, Canada, Jamaica, Netherlands, Nicaragua and Brazil. They expressed satisfaction with the content of the document and considered the process of dialogue established by ECLAC in its preparation to be a highly positive feature.

34. The delegations congratulated the ECLAC secretariat on the quality of the document it had presented, which provided valuable inputs for helping countries to evaluate policies and to understand the responsibilities and challenges they faced in relation to gender equity. The two themes around which it was structured were cross-cutting and strategic: poverty was a synthetic manifestation of accumulated gender inequalities, while institutions were essential for building equity. One delegation highlighted the fact that the document was the outcome of a democratic process of consultation through subregional meetings. As a result, it reflected both the region-wide situation and the specific features of particular countries and groups of women. Another delegation welcomed the methodological support which the document provided for the multisectoral approach to poverty reduction with a gender perspective. All the delegations endorsed the document's focus on assessing progress towards existing goals and targets, since much remained to be done in that regard.

35. The delegations cited a number of areas that required more attention, including the need to ensure that women participated in building a new international financial architecture; the in-depth analysis of how globalization and economic liberalization affected women; the study of poverty as the product of an increasingly exclusionary economic system whose adverse effects could only be remedied through structural reform; the approaches to globalization and liberalization; the rights of migrants, especially labour rights and migrant women's and children's rights in respect of nationality; the need to include gender statistics from all the Caribbean countries in the Commission's analyses, as well as the need for training in the use of statistics disaggregated by gender; the importance of strengthening the family's role in building democracy and equity; and the need to break the cycle of violence by addressing the growing problem of sexual and other types of violence against girls and boys.

36. The delegations unanimously reaffirmed their commitment to the international agreements adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing), which served as central elements of their activities relating to gender equity and the rights of women. A more in-depth analysis was needed in order to understand why economic development did not result in a positive change in the social situation of the countries in the region and how that fact tied in with the conclusions of recent studies on the feminization of poverty and its differential impact on women and men. They requested further development of the gender-sensitive studies on recent trade agreements and, in general, on the repercussions of international trade liberalization on women, in particular on the impact of globalization on their working conditions. It was essential to strengthen the legitimacy of democracy by promoting even further the participation of women in all spheres of the institutional agenda. They advocated continuing to work towards the recognition of women as subjects at law through the full exercise of their sexual, reproductive and economic rights, which was the only way of guaranteeing them true independence. Lastly, several delegations considered that claims for women's rights should be linked to the current world movement in defence of civil rights.

Poverty, economic autonomy and gender equity (agenda item 4)

37. The panel discussion on the above issue was moderated by Josefina Vázquez Mota, Secretary of Social Development of Mexico. Contributions were made by Ms. Mayra Buvinic, Chief of the Social Development Division of the IDB Sustainable Development Department, Matilde Ribeiro, Minister, Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality in Brazil, Otilia Lux, former Minister of Culture of Guatemala, María del Carmen Feijóo, liaison officer for the United Nations Population Fund in Argentina, Maggie Schmeitz, Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action, Cecilia Loría, Director of the Mexican National Institute for Social Development and Silvia Lara, Technical Director of the National Women's Institute of Costa Rica.

38. Participants agreed that the "feminization of poverty" stemmed from social and cultural stereotypes which meant that women were associated with domestic work, personal care and reproductive tasks, while also being discriminated against and marginalized in the world of productive and remunerated work. Prevailing models of economic management and development encouraged and exacerbated such inequality, hence the urgency of examining such models from a gender perspective in order to reform them and eliminate their discriminatory bias. They explained that overcoming gender-based poverty required making the exercise of women's economic rights, and especially their economic autonomy, a priority objective. Given the current situation, it was essential to achieve equality in the labour market, determine the economic value of domestic work at the micro and macroeconomic levels and seek effective solutions for an equitable distribution of the burden of reproductive work and care-giving. Although the bases for such a transformation already existed, the challenge was to ensure that the gender concepts, statistics, indicators and methodologies developed in recent years were as widely integrated as possible into the day-to-day work of Governments and institutions.

Empowerment, institution-building and gender equity (agenda item 5)

39. The panel on the above topic was moderated by Patricia Olamendi, Deputy Secretary for Global Issues in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico. The panellists were Michelle Bachelet, Minister of Defence of Chile, Elizabeth Odio, Judge and Second Vice-President of the International Criminal Court, Ana María Romero de Campero, former Ombudsperson of Bolivia, Lourdes Arizpe, researcher with the Multidisciplinary Regional Research Centre of Mexico, Line Bareiro, expert on gender issues and Glenda Simms, Executive Director of the Bureau of Women's Affairs of Jamaica.

40. All of the participants emphasized the huge significance of the period that had transpired since the World Conference in 1975, as the processes initiated on that occasion had radically altered the dynamic of relations between women and men, not only in the sphere of public or business roles but in all aspects of everyday life. They recognized the valuable work of institutions and organizations of the women's movement in those processes and illustrated them with facts and personal anecdotes.

41. The panellists described the real and symbolic obstacles that had hindered their work as women in posts of high responsibility. In that connection, they supported affirmative action measures as an essential means of constructing truly democratic and representative systems. They also indicated that, in general, women tended to exercise power in a more efficient, constructive and creative way than men, owing to the fact that, for gender reasons, much stricter demands and judgments were made of them. That new way of exercising power offered new possibilities for transforming political, judicial and administrative authorities into forums that were more open to constructive dialogue and the participation of all individuals without discrimination. From that perspective, the objective of equality between men and women remained intimately linked to the goals of the global movement in favour of equity and civil rights.

42. The speakers said that the key focus should be on the strength, contributions and enormous potential of women. At the same time, it was important not to downplay the real risks they were exposed to in conflict and post-conflict situations and in terms of domestic violence, as no real development was possible without their full participation. Despite the significant progress achieved with regard to health, education and employment, women continued to be victims of violence, to be underrepresented in decision-making in all areas and to be disproportionately affected by poverty. The past decades had brought the new challenges of HIV/AIDS, globalization, smuggling and trafficking in persons and information and communication technologies, all of which called for the adoption of measures based on the commitments that the countries had already assumed. New approaches were needed to tackle the structural causes of discrimination, rather than focusing on the consequences in women's lives. Women's empowerment had to be addressed as an essential aspect of decision-making, of concern to both women and men.

Activities commemorating the tenth anniversary of the fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing +10)
(agenda item 6)

43. The representative of the Division for the Advancement of Women in the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the delegation of Cuba and the ECLAC secretariat reported to the Conference on the development of preparations for the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women. The representatives of international organizations then presented reports on their activities and described the initiatives planned within the framework of that event. Statements were made by representatives of the following organizations: United Nations Population Fund, Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (Habitat), United Nations Children's Fund, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Labour Organization, International Telecommunication Union, United Nations Development Fund for Women, Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, World Food Programme and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture. Lastly, the secretariat reported on preparations for the thirtieth session of ECLAC, scheduled to be held from 28 June to 2 July 2004 in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Statements by civil society organizations

44. Speaking on behalf of the civil society organizations present at the Conference, Blanca Dole said that their participation at the meeting was a decisive support for the sovereignty of States and the systems that promoted dialogic and consolidated democracy and a recognition of the Latin American and Caribbean countries' ability to generate their own ideas and to defend them jointly in world forums. She reaffirmed the validity of the principles expressed in the Platform for Action of Beijing, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development of Cairo and the development goals set forth in the Millennium Declaration as an indispensable tool for overcoming an economic model that fostered injustice and inequality and for eradicating a style of development which engendered the racism, exclusion and hunger suffered by people throughout the region.

Report of the Rapporteur

45. The rapporteur presented an oral report in which she outlined the elements that would be contained in the final report of the Conference.

Consideration and adoption of agreements by the Conference (agenda item 7)

46. The representative of Mexico submitted to the plenary meeting a draft declaration entitled Mexico City Consensus and explained that it was the outcome of a broad process of negotiation in which all the member countries present had taken part. At her proposal, the representatives of the States members proceeded to adopt the declaration by acclamation.

47. After adoption by acclamation of the Consensus, the Chairperson indicated that the reservations of the delegations of El Salvador and Nicaragua had been received.

48. The delegation of the United States then made a statement, which appears as annex 2 of this report; subsequently, the delegation of Cuba made a statement, which is reproduced as annex 4.

49. The representative of Canada, speaking on behalf of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Portugal and Canada, said that those countries welcomed the adoption of the Mexico City Consensus. The reaffirmation in the Consensus of the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action and the outcome of the five-year review process (Beijing +5) was a clear demonstration of the region's firm and continuous support for the objectives and commitments of those essential documents and set an important precedent for the preparatory meetings of other regions. The Governments that she represented shared that deep commitment to the international consensus adopted in Beijing. Progress towards the full implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the other international conferences held in the 1990s was essential to the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals. The countries recognized that gender equality and empowerment of women constituted a fundamental target within the framework of those goals; they would therefore strive to ensure that those considerations were reflected in the review of the Millennium Declaration in 2005. She said that at the current session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, countries had gained further insight into the numerous priorities and issues of interest to the region.

50. The representative of Brazil, speaking on behalf of the members and associate members of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), thanked the Government of Mexico for its welcome and expressed appreciation for the role that that nation had played in 1975 as host country for the first World

Conference on Women, which was a milestone in the struggle for the emancipation of women. She was convinced that ten years later, the fortieth anniversary of that memorable occasion would be celebrated with the same spirit and that the current conference would be recalled for the effort to achieve consensus against all odds. In her view, that success stemmed from the recognition and admiration of women who, although lacking the opportunity to express themselves, could be held up as examples of persistence, dignity and struggle for the right to a life of full citizenship.

Closing meeting

51. During the closing session, statements were made by Sonia Montaña, Chief of the Women and Development Unit of ECLAC, Cecilia Pérez, Director of the National Women's Service of Chile and by Patricia Espinosa, President of the National Women's Institute of Mexico, who spoke on behalf of all the delegations. The participants expressed great satisfaction with the outcome of the meeting, which they attributed to the valuable and constant participation of countries, agencies, institutions and civil society organizations in the preparatory process and in the meeting itself, as well as the capacity of the delegations of the member States to build consensus on the meeting's key issues.

MEXICO CITY CONSENSUS

The Governments of the countries participating in the ninth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean,

Gathered in Mexico City from 10 to 12 June 2004,

Recalling that next year will mark the thirtieth anniversary of the United Nations World Conference of the International Women's Year (the first of the world conferences on women), held in Mexico in 1975; the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women; and the fifth anniversary of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", of the Millennium Summit and of the eighth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean,

Considering that at the eighth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Lima, Peru, in February 2000, it was agreed that the implementation of the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean should be extended beyond 2001,

Bearing in mind that the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean is a subsidiary organ of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and that its Presiding Officers, at their thirty-fifth meeting, agreed that the ninth session of the Conference should focus on reviewing the implementation and fulfilment of international and regional agreements and on the analysis of two central themes of strategic importance to the region: (i) poverty, economic autonomy and gender equity and (ii) empowerment, political participation and institution-building,

Acknowledging the contribution of the women's movement, in all its manifestations, to the development of public policies with a gender perspective in the region, taking racial, ethnic and generational diversity into account, and, in particular, to the development of machineries for the advancement of women at the international, regional and national levels,

Highlighting the significant contribution women make towards reducing poverty and strengthening democracy, gender equality, social justice and development in the countries of the region,

Voicing their concern about the negative social effects of structural adjustment policies and, under certain circumstances, free trade, one of whose dimensions is the fragmentation of social policies, and about heavy external debt service obligations,

Recognizing that the benefits and costs of globalization are inequitably distributed, both within and between countries, and that developing countries face special difficulties in meeting this challenge,

Acknowledging the progress made in the areas of legislation, education, health, labour, measures to end violence, sustainable development and the design of public policies that promote gender equity,

Recognizing that this progress is insufficient and that efforts and available resources must be redoubled if the countries are to meet their common goals and objectives, given the multiple obstacles they continue to face in this regard,

Further recognizing the importance of promoting and strengthening affirmative actions for empowering rural, indigenous, Afro-descendent, young and elderly women and for increasing their access to resources,

Deploing the various forms of violence and their manifestations against women, adolescents and children in the region,

Recognizing the magnitude of migration in the region and the need to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of migrant men and women, while acknowledging the importance of remittances as a major source of foreign exchange in migrants' countries of origin, as well as the positive contribution migrants make to the societies that receive them,

1. Welcome the document prepared by the secretariat, entitled "Roads towards gender equity in Latin America and the Caribbean", and recognize that, as it represents the outcome of a process of consultation with representatives of the States members of the Conference, which included five subregional meetings, two of which were conducted using communication technologies, it reflects an approach that is shared by the Latin American and Caribbean Governments;

2. Reaffirm the agreements adopted at the three subregional preparatory meetings for the Caribbean, Central America and Mexico, and South America, held in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Honduras and Brazil, respectively, to provide inputs for this ninth session of the Conference;

3. Also reaffirm our commitment to the objectives set out in the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995), the Plan of Action of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Durban, 2001) and the Millennium Declaration (New York, 2000) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, and to all agreements reaffirming Governments' adherence to this international agenda;³

4. Reiterate that the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Caribbean Community Plan of Action and the commitments referred to in paragraph 3 above is an essential contribution to the achievement of the development goals contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration;

5. Note with satisfaction that most of the national delegations accredited to this ninth session of the Conference include parliamentarians and representatives of civil society, in accordance with the agreement adopted at the thirty-fifth meeting of the Presiding Officers;

6. The Governments of the countries participating in the ninth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean reaffirm our determination to:

³ United Nations, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/CONF.177/20), Beijing, 1995; Report of the International Conference on Population and Development (A/CONF.171/13/Rev.1), Cairo, September 1994; Report of the World Summit for Social Development (A/CONF.166/9), Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995; Report of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (A/CONF.189/12), Durban, 31 August - 8 September 2001; Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2), New York, September 2000.

- (i) Adopt measures in all spheres, particularly the political, social, economic and cultural spheres, including legislative measures and institutional reforms, to ensure the full development and advancement of women of all ages, with a view to guaranteeing their access to justice and their exercise and enjoyment of all human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men;
- (ii) Strive to incorporate a gender perspective, taking racial, ethnic and generational diversity into account, into the design, implementation and evaluation of public policies, using follow-up and assessment instruments and guaranteeing transparency in public management to institutionalize accountability and disseminate information on progress towards the fulfilment of goals and the genuine civic participation of women;
- (iii) Ensure that the gender perspective, taking racial, ethnic and generational diversity into account, is fully included in the design and implementation of national development plans and public policies and programmes in all areas of State action, as well as in the process of budgeting resources to finance them;
- (iv) Design and implement public policies that help to redress the conditions of poverty affecting women in the region, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States, and that recognize the differential impact on men and women of the uneven distribution of the benefits and costs of globalization;
- (v) Adopt proactive policies to promote job creation, including affirmative actions for ensuring that men and women enjoy equal conditions in the labour market, and to strengthen women's entrepreneurial capacity, ensuring full respect for their rights at work and their individual rights, as well as their equitable access to the benefits of social protection;
- (vi) Recognize the economic value of unpaid domestic and productive work, afford protection and support to women working in the informal sector, particularly in relation to caregiving services for children and elderly persons, and implement policies for reconciling family and work responsibilities, involving both men and women in this process;
- (vii) Encourage States to include gender impact considerations, taking racial, ethnic and generational diversity into account, in developing their national policies and positions relative to the negotiation of bilateral and regional trade agreements, and to include gender equity and equality as a priority within national and regional trade capacity-building strategies;
- (viii) Review and assess policies and legislation with a view to strengthening the parental obligation to pay economic support for boys, girls and adolescents and other dependants, and exhort States to negotiate treaties for prosecuting and/or collecting monies due from those who evade these obligations;

- (ix) Implement education policies that meet the countries' development needs, encouraging education for all women and promoting their access to economic, technological and scientific activities conducive to their equitable participation in a globalized world;
- (x) Foster a culture of respect for the human rights of women and carry out wide-ranging programmes to raise awareness in this regard at all levels of education, and incorporate human rights education with a gender, racial and ethnic perspective at all levels of education;
- (xi) Review and implement legislation guaranteeing the responsible exercise of sexual and reproductive rights and non-discriminatory access to health services, including sexual and reproductive health, in accordance with the Lima Consensus;
- (xii) Intensify efforts for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS, while safeguarding the rights of women and girls living with the virus and guaranteeing access, without discrimination, to information, care, education and services for HIV/AIDS prevention;
- (xiii) Strengthen the full participation of women in environmental conservation and management with a view to achieving sustainable development;
- (xiv) Take steps to promote and protect the human rights of migrant men and women, in accordance with each country's constitutional precepts and the international instruments in force;
- (xv) Adopt the comprehensive measures needed to eliminate all forms of violence and their manifestations against all women, including domestic violence, sexual abuse and harassment, incest, sexual exploitation and the trafficking and smuggling of women and girls, forced prostitution, murder, systematic rape and violence in situations of armed conflict, among others, and to eliminate unilateral measures contrary to international law and the Charter of the United Nations;
- (xvi) Promote all women's access to information and communication technologies as a means of eradicating poverty and fostering development;
- (xvii) Enhance the development of an information system based on statistics disaggregated by sex, with a view to effectively mainstreaming a gender perspective, taking racial, ethnic and generational diversity into account, in all government programmes and policies, placing special emphasis on the issues of poverty, unpaid work, time use, gender-based violence and international migration;
- (xviii) Design and revise laws to ensure that, where private ownership of land and property exists, women are accorded full and equal rights to own land and other property, including through the right to inheritance, and undertake administrative reforms and other necessary measures to give women the same right as men to credit, capital, appropriate technologies and access to markets and information;

- (xix) Guarantee that national machineries for the advancement of women are provided with financial and human resources, build their political capacity and consolidate their institutional status at the highest possible level to ensure that they can fulfil their mandates efficiently and effectively;
- (xx) Develop closer ties of collaboration between national machineries for women and regional and international organizations;
- (xxi) Promote the full and equal participation of men and women at all levels of decision-making in the State, society and the marketplace, and promote the participation of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and women's organizations, in decision-making processes at the local, national, regional and global levels to progress in the construction and exercise of full citizenship by all the women of the region;
- (xxii) Develop instruments for monitoring and assessing public policies with a view to mainstreaming a gender perspective, taking racial, ethnic and generational diversity into account, in all State actions;
- (xxiii) Invite legislative bodies in the region to review their countries' laws with a view to harmonizing them with international instruments concerning human rights and the elimination of discrimination against women, children and adolescents;
- (xxiv) Urge Governments that have not yet done so to consider ratifying and effectively implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, as well as the Inter-American Convention for the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, and to adopt an effective mechanism for the implementation and follow-up of the latter Convention by the States parties thereto;
- (xxv) Promote international cooperation to support the activities of national machineries for the advancement of women to implement the Beijing Platform for Action, and urge United Nations organizations and specialized agencies to continue to support national efforts to ensure equal rights and create opportunities for women in the region through cooperation programmes, studies and research, among other initiatives, in accordance with their mandates;

7. Welcome the research agenda proposed in the document "Roads towards gender equity in Latin America and the Caribbean" and request the ECLAC secretariat to take the necessary steps to put it into practice, in collaboration with Governments in the region and other international organizations;

8. Declare that the Mexico City Consensus shall constitute the region's contribution to the work of the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-ninth session, to be held in March 2005;

9. Request the Chairperson to submit the present Consensus to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean for consideration at its thirtieth session, to be held in June and July 2004;

10. Thank the people and Government of Mexico for having provided the facilities for holding this session of the Conference and for their warm hospitality.



Annex 1

RESERVATION OF THE DELEGATION OF EL SALVADOR

Mindful that our country joined the consensus of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt, in 1994, subject to its respective reservations, which we reaffirm on this opportunity together with those made at other conferences,

Whereas El Salvador is consistent with its democratic background, it joins the Mexico City consensus on the basis of its conviction that this document will be useful for the promotion and advancement of women. In this regard, we reaffirm our will to promote the content of the present Consensus subject to the following reservation:

In the case of the Mexico City Consensus, we reiterate our reservation concerning subparagraph 6 (xi) of the present declaration, specifically the sentence referring to "Review and implement legislation..." given that its wording is not compatible with the terms of article 1 of our Constitution relating to the human person, which "recognizes every human being as a human person from the moment of conception".

In view of the foregoing, we request that the present reservation be incorporated in the document of the Mexico City Consensus.

We also request that this reservation be incorporated as a footnote of that document.

Annex 2

EXPLANATION OF POSITION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

While the United States has joined consensus on the "Mexico City Consensus," the United States Government wishes to make the following Explanation of Position.

There is much in the Platform of Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing) and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo) that the United States supports. This support is not just theoretical. The United States is a leader in providing assistance to achieve many of the objectives of both Beijing and Cairo. In Fiscal Year 2003, the U.S. Government provided about \$1.82 billion for health programs. Besides family planning and reproductive health, most of this went to HIV/AIDS, child survival, and maternal health. As you know, President Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS relief is being implemented. That plan will provide \$15 billion over five years to expand prevention and treatment programs. Of this, \$9 billion will be new money. Funding for family planning and reproductive health has amounted to between \$424 million and \$446 million over the last four years, a substantial increase over the four preceding years. Through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States also provided nearly \$474 million for education and training programs in developing countries, mostly for children's basic education and literacy. These and other programs demonstrate the U.S. Government's clear and action-oriented commitment to many of the objectives of Beijing and Cairo.

The United States wishes to associate itself with the numerous delegations that made reservations or statements of interpretation on both the Fourth World Conference on Women and the International Conference on Population and Development, as well as other major UN conferences, as regards the terms "reproductive rights," "sexual rights," "reproductive health," "reproductive health care and services," "family planning services," and "sexual health." The United States understands that the word "reaffirming" in reference to the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, or any other reference to the UN conference documents does not constitute a reaffirmation of any language in those documents that could be interpreted as promoting abortion or the use of abortifacients, nor is it a denial of the United States' firm support for the rights of conscientious objection for health care workers whose personal beliefs might dictate their refusal to perform or be involved in abortion or abortion-related services. The United States does, however, support the treatment of women who suffer injuries or illnesses caused by legal or illegal abortion, including for example, post-abortion care, and does not place such treatment among abortion services.

The United States fully supports the principle of voluntary choice with regard to family planning. Couples should be able to choose which family planning method to use, but also whether to use any method at all. In order to ensure such choices are truly voluntary, couples should be fully informed of the mechanisms, risks, and benefits of the full range of contraceptive methods prior to making choices regarding family planning methods. In no case should abortion be promoted as a method of family planning. Women who have had recourse to abortion should in all cases be given human treatment and counseling.

With regard to "services for HIV/AIDS prevention," the United States fully supports a balanced approach, such as the ABC model: Abstinence, Be Faithful, and, when necessary, appropriate and safe use of Condoms. Based on a growing body of evidence from a number of developing countries, the

United States supports the ABC approach because it can target and balance A, B, and C interventions according to the needs of different at-risk populations and the specific circumstances of a particular country confronting the epidemic.

The United States interprets the reaffirmation of commitments to the objectives and targets set out in the Plan of Action of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Durban, 2001) as only applying to objectives and targets related to women, as the intended and proper scope of this particular declaration. Moreover, the United States Government made no commitments at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance which it can reaffirm.

With regard to the reference the call to “eliminate measures contrary to international law and the charter of the United Nations,” in Operative Paragraph 6 (xv) on violence against and sexual exploitation of women, the United States interprets it to apply to the Cuban Government’s policy of promoting sex tourism, prostitution, and sexual exploitation especially of Cuban women and girls. Such “unilateral measures” by Cuba, a matter of Cuban state policy defended publicly by its Maximum Leader, have the effect of promoting exploitation of women and a state-run industry to attract foreign tourists who systematically degrade women and girls, and are contrary to international law.

Finally, the United States requests the Secretariat of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to include a summary of this Explanation of Position and a clear reference to this Explanation of Position in the official record of this meeting, and to circulate the Explanation of Position as an official document of the Ninth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The United States also requests that the Consensus Declaration include the following footnote:

“The delegation of the United States understands that the terms reproductive and sexual rights and/or services should not be interpreted as endorsing or promoting abortion or the use of abortifacients.”

Annex 3

RESERVATION OF THE DELEGATION OF NICARAGUA

The delegation of the Government of Nicaragua:

1. Welcomes and endorses the Mexico City Consensus.
2. Welcomes with satisfaction the working document "Roads towards gender equity in Latin America and the Caribbean.
3. Reaffirms its commitment to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) and the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995).
4. Reaffirms the commitments and maintains the reservations as established at each of the Conferences referred to in the foregoing paragraph.

Request for footnote: With reference to the terms contained on page 2, paragraph 3 and page 4, paragraph 6, subparagraph (xi), Nicaragua accepts the terms provided that they do not affect its reservations.

Annex 4

REPLY OF THE DELEGATION OF CUBA

A declaration such as the one I have just heard can only stem from the most blatant disregard for truth and from a sense of impotence at the failure, these 45 years, of the economic, financial and trade embargo, of terrorist aggression of all types, of actions to break the unswerving will of the women, of the people of Cuba, to defend their freedom, their independence, their sovereignty, their self-determination and their socialism.

Out of respect for the delegations gathered here today, I cannot allow the calumnies expressed here to go unanswered.

To say that the Cuban Government promotes sex tourism or prostitution is yet another slur systematically thrown out to the world to distort the true picture.

The achievements of Cuban women and the role they occupy in society are a resounding demonstration of the reality in our country. The Revolution has ennobled Cuban women and those present here today are well aware of that fact.

It is really ludicrous and contradictory to hear the representative of the United States Government speak of the status of women, when the whole world has been appalled by news of the violations and tortures in Iraq, when Iraqi women have been defiled by the United States occupying forces. That is how they promote respect for women.

The embargo against Cuba is not a bilateral issue; it is applied extraterritorially and is used to impose United States laws on the rest of the world. The United States threatens Governments, imposes sanctions and pursues at the level of the entire globe those who wish to invest in, or negotiate with, Cuba. Laws such as the Torricelli Act and the Helms-Burton Act are used to establish and enforce such measures.

On 6 May, the President of the United States announced a new package of measures designed to interfere in our affairs, to try to destroy our people, our women.

I categorically reject the lies expressed by the United States delegation. This has been yet another demonstration of their policy of aggression.

Madam Chair,

I request that this statement be incorporated in full in the records of this ninth session of the Regional Conference as an annex to the Mexico City Consensus.