



**SIXTH PLENARY MEETING OF
THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY FORUM OF THE AMERICAS (FIPA)**

OTTAWA, CANADA
SEPTEMBER 13 TO 15, 2009

PROSPERITY AND COOPERATION: A NEW AGENDA FOR THE AMERICAS

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**FINAL REPORT
Fifth Meeting of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas**

(Subject to stylistic amendments)

PRESENTATION

The presentation by our guest speaker, Lynn Holowesko, President of the Senate of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, highlighted the complementarity of men and women based on such factors as the biological makeup of their brains. She believes that each gender makes a contribution that will lead to an improved balance and optimal political governance in an increasingly complex society.

Ms. Holowesko pointed out that the Parliaments of the Americas are seeing slow progress in achieving equal representation of women, and that 10 countries have no elected women parliamentarians. She commented on a U.S. survey which found that women who were candidates in an election were likely to have the following characteristics: honesty, intelligence, openness to new ideas, and creativity. Survey respondents described female politicians as being more honest than male politicians.

Ms. Holowesko said that women in politics tend to focus more on educational and health issues. She suggested that women must start taking greater interest in defence, security, justice and the economy.

DISCUSSIONS

Several participants shared their opinions on how to eliminate or reduce the disparity in the number of women involved in the political process. Some countries have taken legislative measures regarding the selection of candidates from party lists, or have established quotas.

Young parliamentarians felt that the ideal is parity: nothing less than half the seats.



The majority of participants supported this goal. Some seemed to feel that there was no structural barrier preventing women from running for elected office. One participant was concerned that women's entry into the political arena would be to the detriment of children's education. He stated that women could choose whether to enter the fields of politics or economics, particularly since they make up the majority of students in the universities in many countries.

In terms of policies with a greater impact on women, participants called for the Church and the State to stay in their respective areas of activity, particularly with regard to reproductive technologies and termination of pregnancy.

Several participants expressed the desire for stronger legislation regarding family violence, rape and sexual abuse, and in particular, for increased international cooperation to punish offenders.

Lastly, participants noted that the media play a role in constructing barriers that prevent women from achieving equality in public life and went so far as to discriminate against them in some cases.

According to one participant, women parliamentarians should first develop a network of solidarity among all the women in their country. Women candidates have a responsibility to reach out to the women in their region in order to consult with them and inform them about the political process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Adopted by the Plenary Assembly of FIPA on September 15, 2009

Based on deliberations held during the Fifth Meeting of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, which took place in the framework of the Sixth Plenary Meeting of FIPA in Ottawa, Canada, September 13-15, 2009,

THE FIPA PLENARY ASSEMBLY makes the following recommendations:

1. That legislative measures be implemented to ensure equal representation of men and women in the Parliaments of the Americas.
2. That women parliamentarians in the Americas participate fully in the legislative process, moving beyond social and educational issues to deal with matters involving the economy, defence, security, etc.
3. That the Parliaments of the Americas work together to ensure that persons who commit crimes such as rape, sexual abuse, criminal acts of family violence, etc., face sanctions when they cross borders.
4. That women parliamentarians take responsibility for ensuring the participation of women in their regions, and for establishing solidarity networks.



5. Recognizing the importance of the congress of parliamentarians “Towards a Gender-Sensitive Legislative Agenda for Development in the Americas”, held by the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas in Bogotá, Colombia on November 20-21, 2008, the Plenary Assembly:
 - a) Endorses the recommendation adopted by parliamentarians gathered at the congress “Towards a Gender-Sensitive Legislative Agenda for Development in the Americas” annexed to the present recommendation; and
 - b) Encourages FIPA Member Parliaments to report on progress made in the implementation of these recommendations at the next Plenary Meeting of FIPA.

The Honourable Céline Hervieux-Payette

Senator of Canada

Chair of the Fifth Meeting of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas



Original: Spanish

Towards a Gender-Sensitive Legislative Agenda for Development in the Americas

Bogotá, Colombia, November 20-21, 2008

Recommendations

Approved unanimously on November 21, 2008.

We, women and men parliamentarians from across the Americas meeting for the Congress: “Towards a Gender-Sensitive Legislative Agenda for Development in the Americas” on November 20-21 in Bogotá, Colombia, make the following recommendations to be presented to our respective parliaments:

Economic Policies and Gender

- To take the first step in the design of an Action Plan so that parliaments in America have greater influence in development matters and that the latter promote gender equality.
- To include a gender perspective as a central and cross-cutting dimension in the formulation of public budgets at the central, regional and local levels in a way that makes them balanced and sustainable and does not translate into piecemeal programs and projects that are marginal or subsidiary in nature.
- To recognize the need to raise the visibility and equitable remuneration of women’s labour in trade agreements, leading to formal employment with the corresponding social protection and security guaranties.

International Crisis, Development and Gender: Implications for the Americas

- The world crisis particularly affects women, but crises can also provide opportunities. Therefore one must be creative so that the new order that has to be set up is not merely a superficial tweak to the current situation, but in-depth surgery based on an integral, inclusive and sustainable vision, and that gender inequality as well as other numerous existing inequalities are overcome.
- To adopt new criteria to ensure the economic competitiveness of countries, ensuring that this does not lead to precarious income and new forms of exploitation.
- To redefine the existing relationship between productive and reproductive labour so that women and men play an active role in both areas.



Social Policies, Gender and Development

- To adopt a social rights approach, especially a gender approach, in the design of social policies, keeping in mind that this represents a window of opportunity or a favorable scenario for the promotion of a dialogue between social and gender issues.
- To recognize the following advantages in having a gender approach in social policies: (i) Consistency in the values between legislation and reality (ii) Institutional sustainability of the legislative, executive and judicial powers (iii) Greater social and political legitimacy (iv) Better social policies because it allows to detect existing types of discrimination to correct them.
- Human rights should be recognized in social policies as is the case with criminal policies.

Environmental and Sustainability and Gender

- To develop new environmental and gender paradigms.
- To take into account the culture and dignity of indigenous peoples in sustainable development.
- To do a gender-sensitive audit of investments in natural resource sustainability.

Democracy, Political-Electoral Reforms and Gender

- To promote the linkage between the Legislative power and grass-roots social organizations so as to guarantee compliance with the quota law.
- To raise the awareness of the media with the purpose of making the political participation of women more visible and to transform gender stereotypes.
- To propose public financing for political participation that promotes the inclusion of women.