



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
to the Annual Gathering of the Group of Women
Parliamentarians
Canadian Section of ParlAmericas**

**Valparaiso, Chile
May 8 and 9, 2012**

Report

INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Section of ParlAmericas attended the annual Gathering of the ParlAmericas Group of Women Parliamentarians, entitled “Citizen Security for women: a parliamentary task”. The Canadian parliamentary delegation was led by the Honourable Céline Hervieux-Payette, Senator, and was accompanied by Ms. Susan Truppe, M.P., and Ms. Mylène Freeman, M.P. Mr. Leif-Erik Aune assisted the delegation as Secretary. Held annually, the meeting has grown steadily in popularity in recent years. This meeting marked the highest attendance of any ParlAmericas event since 2009, and underscores the continued importance and relevance of strengthening the roles of women in parliament and in society.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

At the Second Plenary Assembly of ParlAmericas, held in Panama City in 2003, participating women parliamentarians held a breakfast meeting to discuss their role in parliament, politics and within the organization. Argentinean Parliamentarian Margarita Stolbizer proposed that the group be established as a permanent body. The suggestion was unanimously approved by the Plenary Assembly. The result was the now well-established and very active Group of Women Parliamentarians.

Currently presided by Ms. Linda Machuca, Representative of the National Assembly of Ecuador, the Group of Women Parliamentarians remains the only permanent working group of ParlAmericas. Open to both men and women parliamentarians, the Group’s meetings and activities strengthen the work of women parliamentarians by providing a space to share and exchange experiences and knowledge from a gender perspective.

THE MEETING

Opening Ceremony

The Meeting was opened by welcoming remarks by parliamentarians representing the National Congress of Chile and ParlAmericas. The first to speak was Deputy Monica Zalaquett, Representative of the National Congress of Chile. Ms. Zalaquett had overseen Chilean preparations for this meeting, and oversaw coordination of participation in the meeting by over 50 parliamentarians from some 26 countries across the Americas. Following Ms. Zalaquett, Ms. Linda Machuca Moscoso, Representative of the National Assembly of Ecuador, and President of the ParlAmericas Group of Women Parliamentarians presented welcoming remarks. Following Ms. Machuca, Mr. Randy Hoback, M.P., President of ParlAmericas addressed the assembly through a video message from his office in Canada. Finally, His Excellency Nicolás Monckeberg Díaz, President of the Chilean Chamber of Deputies, addressed the assembly and presented welcoming remarks. President Monckeberg underscored the necessity of gender equality for healthy states and democratic institutions.

Panel Sessions

Following the Opening Ceremony, the assembly proceeded to the Panel Sessions, which covered three main themes: the meeting sought to address national perspectives,

through facilitated discussions and shared introspective, on gender-based violence and homicide, systemic sexual violence against women, and a gender-based consideration budgetary allocations across the Americas.

Panel 1— Gender-based violence from a national perspective.

Facilitated by Ms. Christine Brendel and Catherine Wolf, the panel considered national perspectives of gender-based violence in Latin America and the Caribbean. Ms. Brendel is Regional Director of the ComVoMujer Programme at the organization “Cooperación Alemana al Desarrollo-GIZ”, whose purpose is to develop measures to improve cooperation between governments and non-governmental organizations to address and prevent gender violence, particularly among rural, indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. Ms. Wolf is Junior Advisor to ComVoMujer.

The facilitators asserted that gender-based violence constitutes a violation of human rights, affecting millions of women all over the world, across all nationalities, social classes, cultures and ages. Ms. Brendel suggested that violence towards women is a global phenomenon, yet presents variations in terms of figures and specific manifestations, which reflect of differing situations across regions. In Latin America and the Caribbean, figures are alarming, and gender-based violence impacts the region’s economy, hindering economic and social development.

The assembly discussed social and cultural patterns driving gender violence in the region, and considered arguments on patriarchal systems marked by systemic discrimination and inequality. Ms. Brendel argued that national strategies against gender-based violence in Latin America and the Caribbean must necessarily focus on social/cultural changes, and on the effective implementation of public policy. The stringent penalization of violence against women must necessarily be accompanied by public education campaigns, and by training sessions for those responsible for implementing and enforcing legislation, regulations and public policy. In addition, Ms. Brendel called for a review of existing regulations so as to provide a legal framework that has a gender-based approach and which considers and addresses the prospects of gender stereotypes and chauvinist concepts

Panel 2—Femicide

Facilitated by Mr. Pável Uranga, the panel discussed case studies of systemic sexual violence against women, the emerging concept of “femicide”, forced disappearances, and trafficking of women for sexual exploitation in

Mexico, Honduras and Ecuador. Mr. Uranga is a Mexican anthropologist specializing in medical and forensic anthropology and social psychology. He has worked with civil society organizations engaged in advocating for women’s lives and security. Co-founder and rapporteur of the Observatorio Ciudadano del Femicidio (Mexico City Femicide Observatory) and the Observatorio Ciudadano Nacional del Femicidio (National City Femicide Observatory – OCNF, as per its Spanish acronym) in Mexico for five years.

Mr. Uranga began his presentation by observing that Femicide has not yet been accepted as a subject for analysis, let alone as a crime. As a result, the convergent phenomena that take place and translate into systemic sexual violence against women remains hidden. Mr. Uranga noted that “sexual slavery” or women trafficking networks

take hundreds of thousands of women from across the Americas. Mr. Uranga suggested that the majority of women that fall into trafficking networks begin as displaced persons caused by armed conflict, social exclusion and the “feminization of poverty”. In this process, Mr. Uranga asserted, women disappear; are taken prisoner through the phenomenon of social exploitation, and are treated as goods by their captors; who turn the women into commodities of no human value. Mr. Uranga further asserted that many trafficked women are murdered in transit. Mr. Uranga pointed out that the business of trafficking in women for sexual exploitation is worth millions of dollars, which are in turn used toward perpetuating the business cycle, and which undermine lawful institutions.

Mr. Uranga continued by discussing the economic, political and regulatory influence exerted by perpetrators on the public policy through corruption, avoidance, negligence, and failure to act. Mr. Uranga concluded by stating that the convergence of transnational crimes that trigger other criminal tendencies such as Femicide, trafficking of women and forced disappearance or sexual slavery, sadly persist as forms of violence against women and should force countries to rethink approaches to addressing these phenomena.

Panel 3— How national budgets are adjusted to the needs of security issues.

Facilitated by Ms. Lorena Vinueza, the panel discussed how federal budgets may be adjusted to meet the public safety needs of women. The panel considered various public safety policies and budget allocations across the Americas. Ms. Vinueza is a clinical psychologist, specializing in systemic family therapy, and is the Director of Citizen Security of the Municipality of Quito, Ecuador.

Ms. Vinueza began her presentation by pointing out that all studied countries include specific budgetary allocations and policy provisions for public safety, styled “citizen security” in most countries of Latin America. Ms. Vinueza noted that the region of the Americas invests more in controlling and combating violence and crime than in rehabilitating and preventing the structural factors that generate violence. Ms. Vinueza presented case studies from Peru, Chile, and Ecuador to demonstrate that budgets allocated to security consider costs for law enforcement, judicial proceedings, and rehabilitation, but that none of her studies revealed investments in primary structural factors (population at large) or secondary structural factors (social groups at risk of committing crimes). Ms. Vinueza suggested that a common factor in Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries is the high levels of inequality in income distribution; a large part of the population lives in chronic poverty. In this context, Ms. Vinueza suggested that this inequality is an act of violence of the economic system against most of the population, thus leading to all the effects of violence; death, illness, psychological trauma, development disorders, and deprivation.

Except for Cuba, insecurity and violence have increased in the LAC Region since the 1980s, concurrently with the main structural adjustments brought about by neoliberal economic policies that dismantled the State and its actual capacity to intervene, noted Ms. Vinueza. The population that is most affected by violence is that suffering from exclusion. In the case of Ecuador, a study on homicide in 2008 demonstrated that over 75% of murder victims had low educational levels. The incidence of homicide in higher

educational levels is very low. Ms. Vinueza concluded that public safety policy should regard violence as a complex phenomenon, the origins of which may be attributed to manifold psychological, biological, economic, social, and cultural factors, and which warrants a multidimensional approach.

Closing Session and Final Remarks

Ms. Linda Machuca Moscoso, Member of the National Assembly of Ecuador and Chair of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas presented closing remarks and thanked the meeting organizers, guest speakers and the meeting participants. She encouraged parliaments to continue supporting forums for discussion and exchange.

The participants were invited to approve a list of recommendations that were noted throughout the two-day Gathering. A report of six recommendations was adopted and is presented in the appendix. The participants were invited to present the report in their respective parliaments. They were also encouraged to use this list as an action plan and follow-up strategy in their parliaments to measure the progress on the inclusion of gender-based initiatives.

CONCLUSION

This visit provided an excellent opportunity for the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas to actively participate in discussions on gender violence and gender-based public policy, topics of continued interest and focus for the ParlAmericas Group of Women Parliamentarians. The Canadian Section also felt that the activity allowed the participants to make contacts with counterparts in the parliaments of many countries. The delegation would like to thank the International Secretariat of ParlAmericas and the National Congress of Chile for their tremendous work in ensuring the success of the event. The delegation also thanks the Canadian Embassy in Santiago, and Ms. Meaghan Pelton in particular, for its support of the delegation and its interest in this important Inter-parliamentary conference. Lastly, the delegation applauds the leadership of Ms. Linda Machuca for organizing an unprecedented level of high participation in a ParlAmericas meeting of the Group of Women Parliamentarians.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald, Senator
Vice-Chair, Canadian Section
ParlAmericas

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Section of ParlAmericas
ACTIVITY	Annual Gathering of the Group of Women Parliamentarians
DESTINATION	Valparaiso, Chili
DATES	May 8 and 9, 2012
DELEGATION:	
SENATE	Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette, Sénator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Susan Truppe, M.P. Mylène Freeman, M.P.
STAFF	Leif-Erik Aune, Executive Secretary
TRANSPORTATION	\$20,889.35
ACCOMMODATION	\$3,926.60
HOSPITALITY	\$0.00
PER DIEMS	\$899.50
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$45.50
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$86
TOTAL	\$25,846.95

APPENDIX

RESOLUTION

Annual Gathering of the Group of Women Parliamentarians (2012)

“Citizen Security for Women, a Parliamentary Task”

Valparaiso, May 9-10, 2012

WHEREAS, the delegates representing all 4 regions of the Americas, namely North America, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean, met at the 2012 Gathering of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas held in Valparaíso, Chile, on May 9-10, 2012; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the issue of Citizen Security for Women, which comprises the phenomenon of femicide, the trafficking in women and girls, and the global crisis of women’s human rights; and

WHEREAS, men and women participants debated on the causes of human trafficking, gender violence, labour violence, systemic sexual violence against women, poverty, discriminatory policies and practices (on account of gender, ethnicity, HIV carrier status, migratory status, refugee status, displacement, pregnancy, disability, childhood or old age, unfavourable economic situation, armed conflict or deprivation of liberty, in addition to limited access to education); and

WHEREAS, participants identified gender violence as an issue affecting girls and women alike, regardless of their age, ethnicity or social or economic level, thus requiring a multi-sectoral and transnational debate; and

WHEREAS, some laws are currently in force that provide for the protection of women and girls in particular, which laws should be more effectively enforced, and new legislation should be passed in order to strengthen the legislative capacity of Member States; and

WHEREAS there is a pressing need to standardize data collection criteria and research protocols in order to create national statistics; and

WHEREAS, participants agreed that national budgets should reflect government priorities,

NOW, THEREFORE, WE RECOMMEND

1. Reasserting the international conventions on women’s human rights, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action endorsed by the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Belem do Pará Convention, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), and particularly, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

2. Creating a system for sharing concrete positive experiences. It is essential to legislate in a participatory way and to involve the executive and legislative powers in order to approve budgets that are in line with the intended goals. Furthermore, effective ongoing oversight and assessment of public policies should be provided.
3. Promoting education and awareness-raising mechanisms through parliaments in order to prevent violence at an early age. This requires a clear definition of all the elements involved in human trafficking and femicide in order to support the detection, prevention, and prosecution of such crimes.
4. Raising awareness on human trafficking and its causes in order to comply with the legislation in force and promoting new laws to prevent human trafficking and prosecute traffickers, as well as to protect the rights of victims and of those who may be vulnerable to trafficking.
5. Exercising surveillance through parliaments to ensure that national budgets are more consistent in terms of the allocation of resources to the agencies in charge of preventing, identifying, and treating gender violence, labour exploitation, and human trafficking.
6. As far as Member States are concerned, redefining their economic models in order to consider excluded populations and those people who are more vulnerable to trafficking, taking into consideration the economic incentives involved in human trafficking. In redefining economy, greater attention should be paid to the demand for human trafficking and on those suspected of engaging in arm and drug trafficking, as well as on illegal trade practices.

We wish to thank all men and women who participated at the 2012 Gathering of the Group of Women Parliamentarians for their valuable contribution to drafting this document; our special acknowledgment to the representatives of Trinidad and Tobago, Senator Lyndira Oudit, and of Dominican Republic, Deputy Lucía Alba, for their suggestions.

July 2012