

## **INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN**

THIRD MEETING OF MINISTERS OR OF THE HIGHEST-RANKING AUTHORITIES RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN THE MEMBER STATES (REMIM-III) November 13, 2008 Santiago, Chile OEA/Ser.L/II.7.9 CIM/REMIM-III/doc.8/08 19 July 2009 Original: Spanish

## MINUTES OF THE THIRD MEETING OF MINISTERS OR OF THE HIGHEST-RANKING AUTHORITIES RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN THE MEMBER STATES (REMIM-III)

November 13, 2008

#### I. INTRODUCTION

The Third Meeting of Ministers or of the Highest-Ranking Authorities Responsible for the Advancement of Women in the Member States (REMIM-III) was convoked by the OAS General Assembly, organized by the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) and held in Santiago, Chile, November 13, 2008.

The Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS) sent the notice of convocation to the governments of the member states, in compliance with resolution AG/RES. 2425 (XXXVIII-O/08) "Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality." The CIM coordinated the event.

# II. PARTICIPANTS

Approximately 100 participants attended the meeting. The Heads of Delegation included, among others, Ministers of Women's Affairs, Ambassadors, and Principal Delegates to the CIM. Also participating were representatives of permanent observer countries, regional and international organizations and nongovernmental organizations, as well as Advisors Emeritus of the CIM and officials of the OAS and the Permanent Missions to the OAS. The list of participants is published in document CIM/REMIM-III/doc.7/08 rev. 1.

#### **III. THE PROCEEDINGS**

Two plenary sessions were held during the meeting. Because of the short period of time available, the inauguration was held in conjunction with the opening ceremony for the Thirty-fourth Assembly of Delegates of the CIM.

#### **B. PLENARY SESSIONS**

#### 1. First plenary session

The first plenary session began at 9:00 a.m. on November 13, 2008. The Hotel Sheraton was the venue. Because REMIM does not have its own rules of procedure, under Article 26 of the Regulations of the CIM and Article 9 of the Regulations of the Assembly of Delegates of the CIM, the Delegate of Chile, the host country, opened the Meeting of Ministers by introducing the work program on Thursday, November 13, 2008.

### a. Election of the President, Vice President and Rapporteur of the Meeting

The plenary proceeded to elect the President, Vice President and *Rapporteur* of the meeting. Nominated by Mexico, Laura Albornoz Pollmann, Minister Director of Chile's National Women's Service, was elected President; nominated by the United States, the Honorable Monica Williams, Director of the Gender Affairs Division of the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago, was elected Vice President; Paraguay nominated Minister Sonia Escobedo, Principal Delegate of Guatemala, who was elected *Rapporteur*. All three were elected by acclamation.

The President then welcomed Mrs. Carmen Vildoso, Minister of Women and Social Development of Peru, who had recently been named to that post and who, on the day of the meeting, had started serving as Minister and as Principal Delegate to the Commission.

## b. Approval of the draft Agenda and the draft Calendar for the Meeting

The meeting then proceeded to approve the following agenda, which appears in document CIM/REMIM-III/doc.2/08 rev. 1:

- 1. Fifth Summit of the Americas: Objectives, schedule of activities, and agenda of the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG)
- 2. Proposals for mainstreaming gender in the Declaration of Commitment of the Fifth Summit of the Americas: "Securing Our Citizens' Future by Promoting Human Prosperity, Energy Security and Environmental Sustainability"
- 3. Adoption of recommendations and strategies, and activities for the follow-up thereto
- 4. Activities in conjunction with civil society

- 5. Best practices in implementing the Inter-American Program referred to in AG/RES. 2425, "Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality"
- 6. Other business

The draft Calendar, published in document CIM/REMIM-III/doc.3/08 rev. 1, was also approved without change.

Minister Laura Albornoz Pollmann called the session to order to discuss item 1 on the agenda: *Fifth Summit of the Americas: Objectives, schedule of activities, and agenda of the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG).* 

The President introduced Ambassador Carlos Appelgren, Director General of Foreign Policy of Chile's Foreign Ministry. Ambassador Appelgren addressed the meeting and gave a presentation. It began with a brief introduction that mentioned the major changes have taken place across the years and the expectations that these changes have created within society, in politics and in the economy. The Ambassador described the summit process as the ultimate expression of multilateralism in the American hemisphere and underscored the evolution of the gender issue and its development within the Summits process over the last four years. The Ambassador observed that this was, in essence, an exercise to empower the region, make it more competitive and heighten its profile in today's interdependent world. He described the Summits as a strategic process, both politically and culturally, and explained that basic sectors like education, labor, justice, culture, health, technology and women's issues make their contributions in advance of a Summit in the form of the results forthcoming from their ministerial meetings.

Ambassador Appelgren observed that more should be done to mainstream gender into this process and that the decisions taken at the meetings of ministers and highest-ranking authorities responsible for women's policy should be a fundamental part of the commitments that the heads of State undertake. This, he said, was essential to lend democratic sustainability to the system, since the gender perspective and women's participation are today essential ingredients of a society that is free, democratic and inclusive.

The Ambassador explained that as Technical Secretariat of the Summits, the Inter-American System should endeavor to have the gender perspective included in the chapters on democracy, human rights, multidimensional security and integral development. He noted that while this was the path set at the four previous summits, the struggle for equal opportunity ought not to stop there and that the Fifth Summit would be a fresh opportunity to continue to forge ahead.

In closing, Ambassador Appelgren urged the participants to submit their proposals to the upcoming meeting of the SIRG, slated for Washington, and thereby ensure the inclusion of topics relevant to gender issues –such as cross-cutting mainstreaming of gender into the political, economic, labor-related, social and cultural areas, with emphasis on social protection and political participation; the relationship between women and poverty and access to decent jobs; the role that women play in mitigating the effects of natural disasters; women and HIV, and improvements in producing reliable gender-related statistics and indicators.

What followed was a lively exchange of ideas concerning the proposals to be presented to the Fifth Summit of the Americas. The Delegate of Canada underscored the importance of the gender issue and how vital it was to continue to promote the role that women play in the economic prosperity of the member States. The Delegate of Venezuela asked for the floor to make the argument that language was the first form of discrimination that women faced. She observed that every document was written in the masculine third person and concluded by saying that her delegation would make a special recommendation to the president to the effect that if the corresponding language was not corrected in documents of that type, Venezuela would file the corresponding observation. The President observed that she would recommend to her Foreign Ministry that the issue of gender in the language used be included and invited all the ministers to do likewise. Costa Rica supported the Venezuelan proposal. The Delegate of Mexico agreed with the Delegate from Costa Rica that the purpose of the meeting was to frame the issues of the working document and to elaborate upon the resolution approved the day before. Mexico proposed that each minister work with her national coordinator of the summit process to negotiate the document that would be approved at the meeting. It also called upon the Office of the President of the CIM to do likewise in Washington the following week.

The importance of the use of gender language was emphasized, as was the need to effect that cultural change. A political mandate from all the governments was needed, inasmuch as the final declaration of the Meeting of Ministers was difficult to negotiate: this is a diverse hemisphere that is home to differing views about our peoples' development; those differences have to be respected, which is the democratic way. By respecting those differences, the hemisphere should be able to mount a common front.

The President thanked Ambassador Appelgren for his presentation.

She then introduced the document prepared by the Government of Chile and by the Secretariat containing the draft declaration of REMIM III. The President noted that the proposed declaration would not be the only tactic employed, as they would be making a presentation directly to the SIRG and meeting directly with the national coordinators of each country.

The President yielded the floor to the delegations so that they might comment on the working document.

The Delegate of Venezuela stated that in the working document, the word equity always preceded the word equality; she suggested that the order be reversed. The Executive Secretariat requested the floor to explain that the expression "equity and equality" had been in use since 2000, when the Ministers met for the first REMIM, which was the result of the Inter-American Program on the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality. The delegates of Canada and Uruguay seconded Venezuela's proposal.

The delegations of Canada, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay expressed concern over the need to amend paragraphs 7, 14 and 56. The Delegation of Colombia suggested that the ideal course of action would be to do an analysis of the draft declaration of commitment. Paraguay suggested that a paragraph 15 be added containing everything that had been discussed.

The Delegate of Chile proposed that one paragraph be added to the working document expressing concern over the language issue and suggesting that women be added in every paragraph, and that at the end of paragraph 9, the concept of decent work be added and that it figure first in order to give it prominence; that women's human rights needed to be added in paragraph 10; and paragraph 11 should mention the production of regional studies and gender-specific statistics.

The Delegate of Costa Rica commented on paragraph 11 of the document, to emphasize the importance of regarding women as full citizens under the law, and not as a minority group; she also mentioned that paragraph 9 should include the issue of access to justice.

The Delegate of Guatemala stated that paragraph 14 should elaborate further on the notion of economic independence or autonomy.

Finally, the President suggested that the gender perspective should be mainstreamed as a cross-cutting issue in all the areas of the Declaration of Commitment and Plan of Action of the Fifth Summit of the Americas.

The President thanked the delegations and speakers for their contributions and comments and invited them to a 15-minute recess to give the Secretariat time to put together a document that would reflect all the suggestions made.

#### 2. Second plenary session

The President called the session to order and invited Mr. Francisco Pilotti, Director of the Department of Social Development and Employment of the OAS, to describe the work his department has been performing in conjunction with the CIM.

Dr. Pilotti opened his remarks by presenting the Best Practices in the Implementation of the Inter-American Program on the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality (PIA), in furtherance of resolution AG/RES. 2425. He reported on the work that the SEDI had done in partnership with the CIM to get the gender perspective mainstreamed into the activities conducted within the framework of the Inter-American Conferences of Ministers of Labor (IACML). He promised to send them the document by way of the Permanent Secretariat.

Dr. Pilotti also reported on the XV Conference of Ministers of Labor, held in Trinidad and Tobago, September 11 to 13, 2008, where the "Strategic Guidelines of the XV IACML for Advancing Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination within a Decent Work Framework" were introduced by the former President of the CIM and presented to the Ministers for their consideration. The Ministers of Labor approved the four strategic lines of action: High Level Dialogues on Gender and Employment; analyzing the gender-related institutional arrangements of Ministries of Labor; Hemispheric horizontal cooperation, and the Hemispheric Labor Observatory on Gender and Employment. The immediate objective was institutional strengthening of the Ministries of Labor, aimed at effectively mainstreaming gender into their operations, policies and programs to facilitate more complete accomplishment of the hemispheric objectives of the 2006-2015 Hemispheric Agenda for the Generation of Decent Work, which was approved within the framework of the ILO in Brasilia in 2006. He pointed out that the ministers of labor had taken care to include the issue of gender on the agendas of all their conferences since 1990, with the result that in 2005 a strategic document was

prepared to integrate a cross-cutting and permanent gender perspective into labor policies. The document was titled "Gender Equality for Decent Work," and was prepared in partnership with the CIM and the ILO. He also reported that all the activities underway in the ministries of labor to make gender a cross-cutting theme had been made possible thanks to the financial support of Human Resources and Social Development Canada.

The President thanked Dr. Pilotti for his presentation and for the information supplied, as they often receive information in this way and not through their ministries of labor. She also observed how interesting it was that resources for this kind of institutional mapping were forthcoming from the Government of Canada. She opined that a feedback system would be a useful means of finding out the results. The President offered the floor to the delegates for their comments and observations.

On the question of feedback, Dr. Pilotti observed that the finding was that a questionnaire needed to be sent to the mechanisms for the advancement of women, so that the universe of respondents was not confined to the ministries alone; this would provide additional input and an analysis could be done of how the apparatus of the state visualized the topic of gender and employment.

The delegates, who requested the floor expressed an interest in knowing more about how receptive and committed the ministries of labor were to the efforts to create jobs, promote policies to advance women and to strengthen the institutionalization of the gender perspective. They also asked Dr. Pilotti to provide more information about the document he had mentioned.

Dr. Pilotti answered the delegates' questions. He observed that it is the responsibility of the missions to supply information from the meeting held in Trinidad and Tobago in 2007. He pointed out that as in every political forum and every ministry, what mattered was the political will, and that was what had become apparent in recent years within the forum: an absolute allegiance to the concept of decent work, which could not disregard the issue of gender inequality. This allegiance to the concept of decent work was made manifest in their declarations and plans of action. Dr. Pilotti said that the job now was to ascertain what institutional mechanisms were available to enable the proposals to materialize. This was the reason for the emphasis placed on strategic guideline two. He reported that the research was underway and was expected to be completed by April or May of next year, together with the final document. That final document would be presented to the XVI Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor, which was scheduled to be held in Buenos Aires in September of next year. He emphasized that if the political determination was present inside the ministries of labor, completion of the institutional mapping would yield an important framework that would enable the Secretariat to see the strengths and weaknesses of certain countries and thereby be able to then design cooperation mechanisms that would enable the ministries to learn the issues of gender equality from each other

The President thanked Dr. Pilotti for his answers. She observed that the natural skepticism that she and other delegates felt was no doubt due to time spent on this issue and how difficult progress had been. She also expressed her interest in continuing to work in partnership with the IACML as soon as the research findings were in.

The Delegate of Colombia suggested to Dr. Pilotti that given the failure to include the gender perspective in the Fifth Summit's Draft Declaration of Commitment, he might consider the possibility of endeavoring to influence the wording of the draft to get the gender perspective introduced from the angle of the IACML area.

The President addressed the Delegate of Canada to ascertain whether her Government might be able to collaborate in the analysis of the mechanisms and of ministries of labor, as this would help strengthen the relationship between the meeting of ministers of labor and the meeting of the mechanisms for the advancement of women. The Delegate answered that she was not certain, but that she would inquire with her Government about the possibility. The President also thanked the Delegate of Canada for her government's contribution.

The Delegate of Uruguay suggested that the mechanisms for the advancement of women should be the first to be informed when any ministry establishes a cooperation mechanism having to do with gender issues.

The President asked that a letter be drafted for the Secretary General to request that a resolution be sent to all the member countries with a view to strengthening the mechanisms for the advancement of women.

The Delegate of Mexico suggested that the dynamic of the new Executive Committee and of the Executive Secretariat of the CIM needed to be rethought. The Delegate of Colombia seconded the Mexican proposal and also suggested that the new Committee's commitments be mapped out, since many countries were unaware of the existing projects. The idea would be to set new criteria for new projects.

A lengthy debate ensued among the Ministers. They analyzed and introduced changes in the working document presented by Chile. The Ministers' principal concern was to ensure that the gender perspective was fully reflected in the draft Declaration of Commitment of Port-of-Spain. With that end in mind, REMIM-III formulated specific recommendations for inclusion in the Fifth Summit of the Americas.

After the various remarks, a consensus was reached and all the recommendations formulated by the Ministers were approved and incorporated into the document titled "Recommendations of the III Meeting of Ministers or of the Highest-Ranking Authorities Responsible for the Advancement of Women in the Member States to the V Summit of the Americas," published as CIM/REMIM-III/doc.6/08. That document, together with the documents from the Thirty-fourth Assembly of Delegates of the CIM, were sent to the National Coordinator of Trinidad and Tobago: "Declaration of Santiago: Strengthening National Machineries for the Advancement of Women with a view to Gender Mainstreaming in Public Policies" [CIM/DEC. 5 (XXXIV-O/08)] and resolution CIM/RES. 248 (XXXIV-O/08) "Gender Mainstreaming in Hemispheric Policies and in the Summit of the Americas." Also, the document CIM/REMIM-III/doc.6/08 and resolution CIM/RES. 248 (XXXIV-O/08) were presented to the SIRG at its Fifth Regular Meeting, held at OAS headquarters in Washington, D.C., in November 2008.

The President thanked all the Ministers for their invaluable contributions and officially closed REMIM-III at 6:00 p.m.

On Thursday, November 13, 2008, the three documents mentioned above were sent by e-mail to all the Principal Delegates, with a copy to the Permanent Missions and to the OAS authorities.

We should mention that on November 16, 2008, the Alternate Delegate of Venezuela sent an e-mail containing her observations on the document distributed. A revised version was published as CIM/REMIM-III/doc.6/08 corr. 1.

ANNEX I

TERCERA REUNIÓN DE MINISTRAS O AUTORIDADES AL MÁS ALTO NIVEL RESPONSABLES DE LAS POLÍTICAS DE LAS MUJERES EN LOS ESTADOS MIEMBROS (REMIM III) 13 de noviembre de 2008 Santiago de Chile, Chile

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ANNEX II