



Organization of  
American States



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

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### **MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES, JOSÉ MIGUEL INSULZA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE DAY OF THE WOMEN OF THE AMERICAS**

(Washington, D.C. - February 18, 2010)

As we commemorate the Day of the Women of the Americas and the 82<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Inter-American Commission of Women, we would also like to salute 15 years of struggles and efforts to fulfill the Beijing commitments and implement the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará), as well as 10 years of work implementing the Inter-American Program on the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality (IAP).

Our commitment to making gender equality a reality is quite clear, and we have a new opportunity to ensure that it translates into a real effort to eliminate discrimination and exploitation, as well as violence against women in all countries of the region. To this end, governments in the Hemisphere decided to declare 2010 as Inter-American Year of Women, and to thereby provide an opportunity to reflect, celebrate the achievements, and discuss new challenges in the quest for full equality between men and women.

The motto of Inter-American Year of Women, "Women and Power: Towards a World of Equality," underscores a disconcerting reality: that despite the achievements as well as widespread and active participation of women, they still have only limited access to power and limited influence in decision-making processes. While we acknowledge the progress that has been made in the region, including greater political representation of women, and while we welcome the election of a new President in Costa Rica, Laura Chinchilla Miranda, we do recognize that there is still a long way to achieving true equality at the decision-making levels in our countries.

The CIM has paved the way – from securing voting rights and citizenship for women, to making the right to a life free of violence a legally-binding international commitment. The CIM was instrumental in the evolution of all inter-American treaties in the area of gender equality, including those pertaining to civil rights and political rights.

Unyielding in its commitment to advancing gender equality and to fulfilling the mandates it has received, the General Secretariat yesterday embarked on a Gender Program that will enhance the Organization's capacity to manage, design, and implement gender-perspective programs and to make our Organization more competitive.

The challenges are constant and sometimes unexpected, as in the tragic events in Haiti, where the loss of gifted women who were committed to the advancement of equality should serve as an example for us to redouble our efforts in this regard.

I invite all governments as well as public and private institutions to contribute to the activities of the Inter-American Year of Women, and to inform us of their achievements so that we can share with one another the lessons learned and open up more equitable pathways to the future.