



Remarks by Ana María Mendieta Trefogli President of the Inter-American Commission of Women of the OAS

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Washington, DC

Your Excellencies, Ministers, Ambassadors and Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to address you as President of the Inter-American Commission of Women, a specialized organ of the OAS, established in 1928 to defend the rights of women and promote gender equality in the Hemisphere.

This year, the CIM celebrates ninety years of struggle for the recognition and protection of women's human rights, in compliance with the mandates granted by its Assembly of Delegates, the General Assembly of the OAS, the Summits of the Americas and other authorities.

Since its creation in 1928 during the Sixth International Conference of American States that took place in Havana, Cuba, the CIM has played a leading role in the struggle for women's equality in the region and has become the hemispheric forum *par excellence* for reflection and debate on public policies to promote women's rights and gender equality.

The 90th anniversary of the CIM offers an opportunity to take stock of achievements, identify the challenges that persist for the full exercise of women's rights, and refine the priorities that the CIM has established as the basis of its work for the next years.

The work of the CIM has been concretized in three fundamental areas:

1. The promotion of the **adoption of inter-American agreements** for the guarantee and protection of women's rights;
2. The provision of **technical assistance to the OAS member states** so that these agreements are translated into public policies and programs that make possible the real exercise of women's rights and the realization of gender equality, in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goal 5; and
3. The **institutionalization of a gender equality and rights approach** in the work of the OAS.



For the Inter-American Commission of Women and for the Region in general, the times we are experiencing of significant advances also present difficulties, which must involve strong support from our States for the work of the Commission to achieve equality between men and women in our countries.

This coincides with the debates on the strategic vision and the future of the OAS, focused on finding diverse sources of funding that will allow the Organization to continue operating with the personnel and resources it needs to fulfill its current mandates and to streamline its work to maximize its comparative advantages. These two objectives are of absolute relevance for the CIM and have provided an essential guiding framework for the work of the Commission in recent years.

Some issues have emerged as fundamental:

- ***The prevention of violence against women***, which allows us to complement our efforts in the areas of care and punishment with a more in-depth questioning of the gender norms and stereotypes that continue to underlie gender-based violence, as well as closer work with the education and communication sectors. A couple of months ago, the Follow-up Mechanism of the Convention of Belém do Pará (MESECVI) published the "Third Hemispheric Report on the Implementation of the Convention of Belém do Pará," which provides a series of concrete recommendations to strengthen our actions in this area
- ***Gender equality for the good of humanity***, which allows us to highlight and reinforce the agenda for gender equality as part of the good in the world. In November of last year, the CIM Executive Committee adopted the "Inter-American Guidelines on Gender Equality for the Good of Humanity," to highlight the concrete benefits of gender equality for women, men and their families in the social, political and economic spheres, as well as identify positive messages of response to movements and discourses that seek to limit the progressive exercise of human rights
- ***Women's leadership for democratic governance***, which gives us the opportunity to strengthen democratic systems with greater participation and leadership of women, in all their diversity, in fulfillment of our commitments to parity and substantive equality. For this, the "Inter-American Task Force on Women's Empowerment and Leadership" has been established, and will seek to give concrete and substantive support to the ability of women to reach leadership positions and exercise power. In this, the identification of barriers to the full exercise of women's political rights, such as violence against women in political life, is of the utmost importance. This year, the CIM launched the "Inter-American Model Law on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women in Political Life," which seeks to strengthen the ability of States to respond to the growing violence perpetrated against women politicians in public spaces.



The Inter-American Commission of Women - both its creation and its advances over nine decades - are the result of the joint work of a multiplicity of women, who from different positions - activists, academics, ministers, first ladies, fighters for their rights - decided to take their demands to the Inter-American arena to amplify them and to support each other.

Looking to the future, I am sure that the CIM will be able to count on the support of each and every one of you to eliminate inequalities between men and women in our region and to fulfill the commitments we have made to the women of the Hemisphere.

Thank you.