States meet to look at advances in eliminating violence against women

[Antigua, Guatemala, March 24th, 2011] Over the last decade, the hemisphere has made progress in adopting laws and policies to punish and eliminate violence against women, but there is still a long way to go before these laws – words on paper – become a daily reality in the lives of women.

Today marks the first day of the Third Conference of States Party to the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI) in Antigua, Guatemala. The Mechanism was established by the OAS in 2004 to support States Party to Convention it its effective and sustainable implementation. Through its Committee of Experts, MESECVI analyzes the implementation of the Convention and formulates recommendations that are adopted by the Conference of States Party.

Among the most important results of the Belém do Pará Convention is that several countries of the region have adopted “second-generation” legislation on violence against women. These laws move beyond the traditional definition of violence against women – that is, “intra-family” violence – to consider other forms of violence, such as rape, femicide, trafficking, sexual harassment and exploitation or emotional or economic violence. Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Venezuela and, most recently, El Salvador have now adopted this type of legislation.

During the Conference, States will look at two issues in particular – indicators on violence against women and addressing violence against women within a context of citizen security. This last issue is of particular importance, since the next General Assembly of the OAS will centre on the issue of citizen security in the Americas.

The Organization of American States (OAS) is the world’s oldest regional organization, dating back to the First International Conference of American State (October 1889 to April 1890). It was established in 1948 with the aim of achieving among the States of the Americas “an order of peace and justice, to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and their independence.” The OAS prioritizes four pillars - democracy, human rights, security, and development – that support each other and are intertwined through political dialogue, inclusiveness, cooperation, and legal and follow-up instruments that provide the OAS with the tools to maximize its work in the Hemisphere.

Established in 1928, the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) was the first inter-governmental agency established to ensure recognition of the human rights of women. CIM is made up of 34 Principal Delegates, one for each member state, and has become the principal forum for debating and formulating policy on gender equality and women’s empowerment in the Americas.

For more information, visit CIM at: http://www.oas.org/cim