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PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE STATUTE OF THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN (CIM)

SUMMARY OF AMENDMENTS AND CHANGES TO THE STATUTE OF THE CIM (1948-2007)

The CIM was created in 1928. Twenty years later, in 1948, the Ninth International Conference of American States in Bogotá, Colombia adopted its first statute, consolidating its structure and establishing its headquarters within the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States. The following year, in 1949, the Sixth (First Special) Assembly of the Commission adopted the first regulations of CIM and elected its officers.

Since then, changes and amendments have been made to the Statute and the Regulations of CIM, either to tailor them to new realities or objectives, or to bring them into line with the agreements signed between CIM and the OAS (1953-1978), in keeping with amendments to the OAS Charter.

Over this period, CIM has evolved from a permanent body, under the OAS General Secretariat, into a "permanent, intergovernmental inter-American specialized agency, established in accordance with the provisions of chapter 18 of the Charter of the Organization of American States. It enjoys technical autonomy in the performance of its functions, within the limits of its Statute and of the Charter of the Organization." This wording dates back to 1980, and in 2007 "and inter-governmental" was added.

A number of changes and additions were made to the objectives and functions of CIM, notably in 1976, 1980, and 1998, consolidating CIM as an advisory body of the OAS whose purpose was to maintain relations with inter-American and global organizations and to report fomally on the civil, political, social, and economic status of women in the Americas. The latest revision of the Statute was conducted in 2007, when a new subsection was included to urge governments to take measures to promote full and equal participation by women in civil, economic, social, cultural, and political spheres.

The 1968 Statute established the Commission's structure, which remains similar to what exists today: the Assembly of Delegates, Executive Committee, President, Delegates, Permanent Secretariat, and National Committees of Cooperation (the latter were abolished in 2007). Reference was made for the first time to Principal Delegates. The post of Executive Secretary was also created, to be in charge of the Permanent Secretariat and appointed by the OAS Secretary General to a five-year term. The deadline for the appointment was removed in 1980.

Assemblies of Delegates were held annually until 1968, when it was decided that they would be held every two years, as remains the case today.

The composition and term of office of the CIM Executive Committee have varied over the years. Initially, there were four members whose terms were renewable every two years in order to maintain the continuity of the Committee. In 1968 it was established that the Executive Committee would comprise the President, the Vice President, and Delegates from five countries. The principle of equitable geographical distribution was added later on.

The President served for four years and was stationed at CIM headquarters in Washington, DC, with her expenses borne by her government. This changed in 1968 when authorization was given for the functions of the President to be performed in any country of the Americas.

Originally, the CIM Statute contained a chapter on the functions of the Vice-President and, beginning in 1968, the post was made to run concurrently with the term of the President and it was established that the Vice-President would be elected at the same time as the President and for the same period.

The most recent meetings of the CIM Executive Committee have shown clearly that an increasing number of Delegates have been taking an active part in the work of the CIM. Mindful of this, and based on the interest expressed by various countries, the Executive Committee was consulted with a view to increasing the number of Vice Presidents.

Accordingly, the proposed amendments to the CIM Statute are intended to address the problem of simultaneous vacancies in the offices of the President and Vice President of the CIM. The creation of two additional Vice Presidencies is designed to ensure that, in the event that the office of President becomes vacant, multiple officers will be available to accede into the position. This accession eliminates the need to convoke a special meeting of the Assembly of Delegates to hold elections to fill the vacant office, while also ensuring that the officer acceding into the position has been elected by the Assembly.

The concrete changes proposed to the CIM Statute affect Articles 17, 18, 20, and 22 in the following ways:

<u>Article 17</u>

The Executive Committee shall include a maximum of three Vice-Presidents, determined by the number of candidacies, who shall be elected at the same Assembly at which the President of the Commission is elected, in the same manner, and for the same term of office as the President, and taking into consideration the principle of geographic rotation. The Vice-Presidencies shall be filled by delegates from different geographic regions and shall have the same status within the Executive

Committee. In the event that one of the Vice-Presidents assumes the office of President, she shall assume all the rights and duties of that office and shall serve until the end of the term.

Article 18

If the President should for any reason be unable to serve in her post, one of the Vice-Presidents shall replace her in the performance of her duties. The Executive Committee shall elect, within 90 days and by an absolute majority, a President from the Vice-Presidents.

Article 20

In the event the offices of the President and the Vice-Presidents fall vacant simultaneously, the Executive Committee shall appoint by an absolute majority one of its members as Acting President, to serve until a new election is held. Within ninety days after the appointment of an Acting President, the Executive Committee shall convene a special Assembly to elect officers for both positions.

Article 22

The Executive Committee shall be composed of the President, a maximum of three Vice-Presidents and the Principal or Alternate Delegates of the five countries elected. The Executive Committee shall meet at the Headquarters of the Commission or in any member state of the Organization of American States at least twice a year.

The amendments in large part simply alter the statutory language to increase the number of Vice Presidents from one to a maximum of three:

- Article 17 is amended to provide that in the event that the President is unable to serve in her post, the Executive Committee shall elect as soon as possible and by an absolute majority an acting President from amongst the Vice Presidents.
- Article 18 is amended to include the phrase “as determined by the number of candidates” to make clear that there may be fewer than three Vice Presidents in the event that there are an insufficient number of candidates to fill three positions.
- Article 18 is further amended to include the phrase “and shall have equal status within the Executive Committee” to make clear that all Vice Presidents are of equal rank and have equal rights and responsibilities as members of the Executive Committee.
- Articles 17 and 18 are inverted such that new Article 17 will address the manner in which the Vice Presidents are elected and new Article 18 will address the accession of one of the Vice Presidents into the office of President, in the event that the President is unable to serve in her post.