SIDE EVENT TO THE VII SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

‘PROSPERITY WITH EQUITY: THE CHALLENGE OF COOPERATION IN THE AMERICAS’

‘Progress of Women in the Americas:
A critical overview of Beijing +20 and perspectives for the post-2015 development agenda:
Care policies’

April 9th 2015
10:30 – 12:30

Marriott -Finisterre Hotel
Address: Bella Vista, Calle Colombia and Calle República del Paraguay
Rooms: Arosa and Sagres

CONCEPT NOTE

In the context of the VII Summit of the Americas and its theme “Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas,” the Organization of American States (OAS) and UN Women propose a Forum on “Progress of Women in the Americas: A critical overview of Beijing +20 and perspectives for the post-2015 development agenda,” with a view to assessing the progress and pending challenges to accelerating gender equality and women’s empowerment in the region.

Despite the economic growth and prosperity that have characterized recent years, our region continues to reflect significant inequality and broad sectors of society continue to be marginalized from the benefits of economic growth, vulnerable in their access to opportunities and excluded from participatory processes. At the international level, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have served as a framework, with the fight against poverty as a cross-cutting issue. At the inter-American level, the countries of the region have prioritized the discussion of development with equity and social inclusion, and its links to the strengthening of democratic governance.  

1 The MDGs include eight goals: poverty alleviation, education, gender equality and empowerment of women, maternal and child health, reducing HIV / AIDS and communicable diseases, environmental sustainability, and construction of a Global Partnership for Development. For more information: http://www.unwomen.org/es/what-we-do/post-2015#sthash.5ebQbWZ1.dpuf
Cultural attitudes and norms related to traditional gender roles and stereotypes continue to pose a challenge to the full exercise of women’s rights in the region. Women are over-represented among those who live in poverty, while they are under-represented in power and decision-making spaces. Despite the fact that women have achieved higher levels of education than men, this access has not led to their incorporation into remunerated work (in particular, decent work).

The average rate of women’s participation in the labour force in Latin America increased only 10% between 1990 and 2010, which place women at 50% by the end of the decade, while 90% of non-remunerated domestic work continues to be performed by women. Men earn more than women at every age, education level and type of employment. More than half of women who work do so in the informal economy and in 2014, according to ECLAC, this work diminished. Over the last few years, women’s participation in agriculture and manufacturing decreased to 10.4% and 11.6%, respectively, in 2012 (the latest year for which regional data are available), while their participation in the service sector is 76.9%. Women’s main occupation in terms of percentages is domestic worker (14% of all women who work), which reflects the enormous demand for care work that has very little public investment and is carried our primarily under informal conditions. Over half of the women in the LAC region who join the labour market do so in the informal economy, without social protection and under conditions of poverty or high vulnerability to poverty.

This lack of economic autonomy and access to opportunities, together with discrimination and stereotypes, affects women’s ability to participate equally in all aspects of public and private life, exercise their rights to access and justice and their opportunities to live a decent life. Violence against women, in particular, represents both a lack of autonomy and an obstacle to the full empowerment of women. The region continues to be characterized by extremely high levels of violence against women and girls in both the public and private sphere.

Throughout the world, the primary obstacle to women’s achievement of full economic and political autonomy, as well as their equal participation in all areas is undoubtedly the burden of non-remunerated labour – that is domestic and care work. The United Nations’ Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, has positioned the care economy as a matter of highest importance for human rights, in particular non-remunerated care work. She observes that, “Across the world, millions of women still find that poverty is their reward for a lifetime spent caring, and unpaid care provision by women and girls is still treated as an infinite, cost-free resource that fills the gaps when public services are not available or accessible,” and she underlines the lack or non-existence of public policies and services on care and co-responsibility. She demands in the same report that public policies position the issue of care as a collective social responsibility, as well as recognizing the rights of both care-givers and the people for whom they are caring.

Similarly, this situation negatively impacts the essential conciliation that women must make between the non-remunerated care work of the household and remunerated work in the labour market, more particularly on families with less income and in situations of vulnerability.

Gender inequalities intersect with other forms of social inequality and discrimination in the region. There are marked differences in particular pertaining to afro-descendant and indigenous communities. On the other hand, early marriage and high rates of adolescent pregnancy reinforce women’s condition

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4 Panorama Social 2012, CEPAL.
of dependence and vulnerability. Similarly, women with disabilities or different sexual orientations face another series of challenges that place them at a disadvantage with respect to other women and to men in the same situation.

The growing acceptance and visibility of women’s participation in political decision-making has placed gender issues at the centre of the political agenda over the last few years, though with few exceptions, the issue of care continues to be largely absent from this agenda. The region has one of the highest rates of female Heads of State and is the second region (behind the Nordic countries) in terms of women’s representation in legislatures. Many countries have quota laws and five have adopted parity; however the majority of parliaments are still far from achieving the critical mass of 30%. At the local level, only 10% of mayors and approximately 25% of councilors are women. Women leaders within political parties continue to be an exception and, in general, women are not present within the key issues of the State.

Since the celebration of Beijing, seemingly innumerable declarations have committed to achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment, including the Consensuses of the Regional Conferences on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean from Quito and Brasilia, which highlighted issues of care and co-responsibility. Nevertheless, 20 years on, this is a reality in no country of the world and the gaps between women and men in terms of equality continue to be wide and persistent.

This Forum is proposed as a space to review the progress made in terms of gender equality, assessing the advances since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, highlighting the issues of economic empowerment and non-remunerated work, within the framework of the objectives and goals of the Post-2015 Agenda and with a view to contributing to the Summit of the Americas 2015 on prosperity with equity.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the international and regional commitments adopted by States call for an increase in the allocation of financial, human and technical resources, gender-related budgeting and funding, execution and accountability, as well as the importance of gender statistics and indicators that support the application of gender equality policies in the context of the post-2015 development agenda and the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which will take place during 2015.

**Issues:**
Gender equality, women’s rights and empowerment, care policies, impact of gender inequality on well-being and prosperity in the societies of the Americas.

**Organizers:**
OAS General Secretariat (Department of Social Inclusion of the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development and the Inter-American Commission of Women/CIM) and UN Women, through the Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean.

**Objective:**
This side-event aims to provide a critical overview of the progress and pending challenges in the Americas to implement the actions listed in the Beijing Platform for Action, particularly those related to economic autonomy, non-remunerated work and co-responsibility between women and men, with a view to identifying concrete proposals for accelerating the pace of change for women in the context of the post-2015 agenda. The proposals identified will be shared with the OAS Member States in a
Methodology:

I. Debate among panelists
   There will be an initial peer debate (40 minutes) with the participation of experts and State representatives (4 minutes each). It is expected that comments will be concise and include specific examples and concrete proposals.

II. Plenary debate
   Debate (40 minutes) with members of the audience (3 minutes each)

Participants:

✓ Representatives of OAS Member States
✓ Representatives of international organizations and cooperation agencies
✓ Representatives of civil society and networks of political women
✓ Experts and specialists on gender equality

Guiding questions:

➢ Beyond the general commitments of States to women’s rights and gender equality, is there a specific legal framework surrounding the issue of care? What commitments have States adopted in this area?
➢ Under the right to social security, the progress indicators on the rights enshrined in the San Salvador Protocol mention “the extension, coverage and jurisdiction of mechanisms for the inclusion of those who perform reproductive or domestic and care work.” What progress has the region made in this area?
➢ What are the main challenges to the adoption of public policies and the provision of services that would allow for an equitable redistribution of care between women, men and the State?
➢ What are the main achievements of the region in terms of care and/or co-responsibility?
➢ What advocacy strategies can be used to demand more and better public policies on the issue of care?
➢ How can we analyze and disseminate these experiences at the hemispheric level so that they can serve as examples?