

## Gender equality in political representation: CIM and the Andean Parliament conclude a seminar on quota laws in the Andean región

[Washington, DC, 12 May 2010] Adopt and implement parity, alternation and sequencing laws; approve mechanisms for exigency and monitoring and administrative sanctions for non-compliance with quota laws; promote the reform of electoral systems and encourage political parties to give more importance to women's political participation. These are some of the agreements reached during a special session of the Andean Parliament on "Quota Laws: State of the art, good practices and pending challenges in the Andean region" (Lima, May 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> 2010).

Organized by the Inter-American Commission of Women in the context of the project "Strategies for the effective application of quota laws in the Andean region," the aim of this international seminar was to strengthen political and administrative commitment to the adoption and implementation of special measures – including electoral quota laws – to support women's effective political representation in the Andean region.

The seminar brought together electoral authorities, representatives of the national machineries for the advancement of women and international experts on electoral systems, representation and women's political participation to examine and debate existing good practices in the region, identify persistent obstacles and propose legal, policy and administrative measures needed to ensure the adoption and compliance of quota laws.

In spite of the advances achieved in recent years, among them the election of three female presidents – Michelle Bachelet of Chile, Cristina Fernandez of Argentina and Laura Chinchilla of Costa Rica – the regional average of women in Parliament (single house and lower/upper house) in 17.45%, a figure that does not even reach the 30% established by the majority of quota laws. Through some countries have reached, and even surpassed the 30% mark (Costa Rica – 38.6%, Argentina – 38.5%, Ecuador – 32.3%, Guyana – 30%),<sup>1</sup> most countries of the region still have a long way to go.

The barriers to women's political representation are many, and run the gamut from social barriers – the non-existence of a gender-sensitive political culture or persistent structural discrimination against women – to administrative barriers – the lack of norms that force political parties to place women candidates in electable posts.



(from left to right)  
Anel Townsend – CIM Consultant, Elida Ponte – Deputy Minister of Women of Venezuela, Beatriz Merino – Ombudswoman of Peru, María Arboleda – Representative of the Office of Women of Ecuador, Susana Puente – Juridical Director of the Dept. of Public Administration of Colombia



(from left to right)  
Betty Amores – Representative of the National Assembly of Ecuador, Commission on the Rights of Women, Manuela Covacango – Electoral Counsellor of Ecuador, Luis Alva Castro – President of the Congress of Peru, María Caicedo – Electoral Counsellor of Ecuador, Anel Townsend – CIM Consultant, Yolima Carrillo – Electoral Council of Colombia

<sup>1</sup> Data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

Despite these barriers, there is a strong political commitment to the promotion of gender parity in political representation and the inclusion of women and other marginalized groups in political and decision-making processes on the basis of their own demands and interests. This remains a central aspect of the political reforms necessary to strengthen democratic governance in the Americas.

During the seminar, participants validated an analytical document that will be published by CIM over the course of this year and identified a number of follow-up actions for the CIM project, including the creation of more opportunities de academic and political debate on the formulation of quota laws, as well as technical support to their implementation.

For more information, visit: <http://www.oas.org/cim>

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*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 official inter-governmental agency in the world created expressly to ensure recognition of the civil and political 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.*