



Organization of
American States



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DECLARATION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN IN SUPPORT OF HAITIAN WOMEN

(Adopted by the Executive Committee at its third regular session,
held on February 26, 2010)

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN (CIM), meeting at its third regular session, in Washington, D.C., from February 24 to 26, 2010,

REITERATING its condolences, solidarity, and support to the people and Government of Haiti in the face of the situation they are experiencing following the earthquake that devastated that country on January 12, 2010;

EXPRESSING ITS CONCERN, as a hemispheric forum for the promotion of women's human rights and gender equality, over the new challenges facing Haitian women;

GRATEFUL for the initiatives taken by the OAS member states, permanent observers, entities of the inter-American system, and the international community in general to assist and rebuild in Haiti in response to the devastating effects of the earthquake and the substantial human and material losses it caused;

RECOGNIZING of the Declaration of the Permanent Council "Support for the people and government of Haiti in the aftermath of the January 12 massive earthquake," approved unanimously on February 17th 2010 CP/DEC.44 (1740/10);

STRESSING the importance of ensuring harmonization and coordination of all aid; and

RECALLING that the January 27, 2009, statement of the CEDAW Committee on the situation in Haiti calls for the identification of and attention to women's specific needs in all aspects related to food, health, safety, and participation in the current decision-making process and in long-term efforts,

BEARING IN MIND:

1. That disasters of this type exacerbate the conditions of exclusion, discrimination, and poverty experienced by women and expose them to various forms of gender-based violence, such as domestic violence, sexual violence in exchange for favors or services, trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation or servitude, and the sale and smuggling of girls and boys, which can go unpunished owing to changes in police services and the administration of justice that result from circumstances like this one;
2. That Haitian women play a critical role in the building citizenship, in the survival of families and in the country's economy;
3. That women's risk of being affected by epidemics generated by the disaster has increased and that pre-existing health risks, like maternal mortality, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and malaria, persist;
4. That, for cultural reasons, women have historically borne the burden of care and, in particular, for the care of children, the elderly, the sick, and the differently abled, which increases their responsibilities and entails additional work that make it difficult for them to participate in emergency, reconstruction, and prevention efforts;
5. That experience has shown that, when women are included in decision-making in emergency situations, efforts are more efficient and effective;
6. That it is vital to have a strengthened National Women's Affairs Mechanism to serve as a guide for public policies and for coordinating gender equality and women's rights efforts and policies;

RECOMMENDS to the OAS member states, permanent observers, entities of the inter-American system, civil society, and the international community in general that they:

1. Guarantee that the resources destined to the reconstruction of the country, through programmes, plans and actions, incorporate the gender perspective in the different phases of the emergency response, under the coordination of the Government of Haiti, and take care that this support takes into account the needs of Haitian women and does not reinforce traditional gender roles.
2. Provide urgent support, by all means within their power, to strengthen the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Women's Rights of Haiti so it can continue to carry out its functions during the country's current emergency response and longer term economic recovery, and promote that any support to re-building public institutions in Haiti considers, from the beginning, the gender perspective as a fundamental element of public policy.
3. Promote the participation of women's and civil society organizations in democratic

reconstruction and institutional strengthening.

4. Urge the appropriate national bodies and the international community to adopt the necessary measures to prevent and punish gender-based violence, ensuring the physical and psychological and sexual well-being of women and girls, as well as the unrestricted respect of human rights.
5. Urge the appropriate national bodies and the international community to pay specific attention to the right to property and ownership of property, in particular from a gender perspective and taking into account the situation of women living in “common-law” unions.
6. Pay specific attention to the health situation of women and girls in order to guarantee service delivery that responds to their specific needs.
7. Request to the General Secretariat of the OAS that inter-American measures to assist Haiti address the rights, needs, and demands of women and girls and include them in the decision-making processes, projects and programmes for medium- and long-term rehabilitation that are supported by the organization, under the coordination of the Government of Haiti.
8. Present this document to the World Summit on the Reconstruction of Haiti, which will take place in the Dominican Republic on June 2nd of this year.