

Speech

Organization of American States



**LUIGI R. EINAUDI, ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL OF
THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
AT THE XXX ASSEMBLY OF DELEGATES OF THE INTER-
AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN
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Thank you, Mrs. Lomellin. The Hon. Indranie Chandarpal, Vice President and Acting President of the Inter-American Commission of Women, and Minister of Labour, Human Services, and Social Security of Guyana; Ambassador Peter Boehm, Chair of the Permanent Council and Permanent Representative of Canada to the Organization of American States, Mrs. Carmen Lomellin, Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission of Women, distinguished delegates, ambassadors, delegates and emeritus advisors, special guests, members of civil society, ladies and gentlemen:

I am honored, on behalf of Secretary General Gaviria and in my own behalf, to welcome you to the XXX Assembly of Delegates of the Inter-American Commission of Women. This is the first time that I have the opportunity to address the CIM since becoming Assistant Secretary General and I am delighted that it is on this special occasion and in the presence of so many delegates. I am pleased at the regional turnout and I am particularly pleased to see that the Caribbean is upholding its tradition of leadership in women's affairs; this augurs well for the integration and full representation that must be our objective as we prepare for the next Summit of the Americas in Quebec city, five short months from now. So, it is a good moment to get to know one each other.

As you know, in the OAS administrative structure the CIM Permanent Secretariat comes under the Office of the Assistant Secretary General, and I am looking forward to collaborating closely with CIM in what I hope will be a very dynamic and productive association.

Let me begin by congratulating CIM's officials, President Dulce María Sauri Riancho and Vice President Indranie Chandarpal and the other members of the outgoing Executive Committee for their excellent work during the past two years. In this period, it is clear that CIM has made a remarkable effort to redefine its strategies and to strengthen, its role. Because the CIM is the Hemisphere's principal governmental forum on women's issues, I am particularly pleased to recognize the presence with us today also of Dulce María Pereira, the Secretary General of the Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa. She is based in Lisbon but she is one of us --from Brazil, and her presence here with us today reminds us that our work is not just regional, that it is universal, with global implications.

The CIM's potential was evidenced in last April's Meeting of Ministers and Highest Authorities Responsible for the Advancement of Women in the Member States, convened by the 1999 OAS General Assembly in response to an initiative of the previous CIM'S Assembly of Delegates. At this meeting, Ministers of Women's Affairs of the region came together to establish a hemispheric agenda.

The meeting had two very important outcomes. The first was the approval of the Inter-American Program for the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality. This Program, adopted by the XXX General Assembly of the OAS, is a blueprint for achieving legal equality and equal opportunity for women and men in the member states and for systematically integrating a gender perspective into the programs and activities of the organs, agencies and entities of the OAS. Both the member states and the General Secretariat of OAS have been assigned responsibility for carrying out the Program and CIM has pivotal role in following up, coordinating, and evaluating its implementation.

The second significant outcome of last April's ministerial was that it created a much needed link with the Summit of the Americas process. In keeping with the Inter-American Program, the ministers recommended that a gender perspective also be integrated as a cross cutting theme in the Political Declaration and Plan of Action of the III Summit of the Americas. This proposal for equal rights and opportunities for women was approved by the governments at the General Assembly of the OAS last June in Windsor. The Assembly also recommended holding ministerial meetings on the advancement of women every four years to assure that Summit implementation takes the Inter-American Program into account. This structure for consultation and consensus building should help promote gender mainstreaming in the Hemisphere and reinforce CIM's role in advancing women's rights and gender equality.

La Oficina de Seguimiento de Cumbres es la Unidad que tiene bajo su responsabilidad la coordinación de la participación de la OEA en los procesos de cumbres. Cabe advertir en ese sentido que la CIM viene colaborando con esta oficina para que la perspectiva de género sea incluida en cada una de las tres cestas de temas que conforman la agenda de la próxima Cumbre de Quebec. Me refiero, desde luego, a los temas de fortalecimiento de la democracia, creación de prosperidad y realización del capital humano.

Sobre este particular cabe destacar que el sentido transversal de los temas de género hace que el avance de la mujer en los ámbitos social, económico y político se traduzca siempre en un avance de la sociedad en su conjunto. Y en ese sentido la promoción de los derechos humanos de la mujer y la igual de género configuran instrumentos de significativa importancia para el logro de la plena, igualitaria y más activa participación de la mujer en la cosa pública.

Ciertamente, esta promoción constituye también un valioso aporte a la consolidación del sistema democrático, objetivo fundamental de nuestros gobiernos y de este foro hemisférico, la OEA.

Coming closer to home, within the OAS Secretariat itself, efforts to promote gender equality and to increase the number of women in senior-level positions were initiated in 1986, with the adoption of resolution AG/RES. 829 (XVI-O/86), "Full and Equal Participation of Women by the year 2000." At that time, women made up 28 percent of the professional staff of the Secretariat. Today, women make up approximately 41 percent of the OAS professional staff. At present, in addition to CIM's Permanent Secretariat, the Office of the Inspector General, the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy, the Office of Protocol, the Office of Cultural Affairs, the Art Museum, the Columbus Library, and four OAS Secretariat offices in the member countries are headed by women. My Chief of Staff, Mrs. Sandra Honoré, a distinguished diplomat from Trinidad and Tobago, is the first woman to hold this position, and I might also add that as of today, there is 50 percent gender equity among my small staff of advisors because, in addition to Sandra, Cristina Tomassoni, whom many of you will recognize as a former Executive Secretary of the CIM, is also working with me. Their performance makes it obvious that the presence of women in professional, managerial, and political positions within the Organization greatly strengthens our work in all fields.

In the past, we have had women in positions now occupied by men, like the Executive Secretariat of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. In the future, I hope we will have a woman head of an electoral observation mission, of which we have so far had about fifty, all of them headed by men. Our aim should be parity --as a recognition of quality, not as an application of quotas--, for all professional categories, particularly at senior levels, by the year 2005.

In this same context, since the appointment in 1952 of Angela Acuña de Chacón as Ambassador of Costa Rica, many countries have appointed women Permanent Representatives to the OAS, among them Argentina, The Bahamas, Belize, Bolivia, Chile, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States, and Venezuela. Today two of the key committees of the Permanent Council, Political and Juridical Affairs and Administrative and Budgetary Affairs, are presided over by women ambassadors, Margarita Escobar of El Salvador and Laura Núñez of Honduras. Nor will it surprise you hear that for some years it has been common knowledge

that many achievements of the Permanent Council have originated in the work and consensus-building skills of the women alternate representatives. Indeed, when I was the US Permanent Representative to the Permanent Council ten years ago, many of my achievements were actually the work of Sara Horsey-Barr, then my deputy and, I believe, today an observer to this assembly.

Señoras delegadas, a pesar de los extraordinarios e importantes avances logrados durante el siglo XX, aún percibimos que la participación de la mujer en las estructuras de poder no reviste condiciones de plenitud e igualdad; factores culturales y estructurales todavía hoy frenan su avance. Por eso, la CIM tiene ante sí un importante desafío para ejecutar todas las acciones y responsabilidades que le han encomendado los gobiernos del Hemisferio en oportunidad de aprobar el Programa Interamericano. Desde mi perspectiva, el reto para ustedes en esta asamblea es definir, enfocar lo más claramente posible, los temas a trasladarse a la Cumbre de la ciudad de Quebec. Los temas centrales podrían enfocarse en materias específicas del campo de derechos humanos como son, por ejemplo, la eliminación de la violencia y el tráfico ilícito de mujeres o niños, o tópicos de naturaleza más general, pero de vital importancia, como es el relativo al logro de mayores oportunidades de liderazgo político.

Estoy cierto que esta Asamblea de Delegadas sabrá identificar los mejores cursos de acción para alcanzar las metas señaladas. Les deseo el mejor de los éxitos en sus sesiones y les aseguro que tendrán en el desempeño de su importantes labores nuestro incondicional apoyo.

Muchas gracias.

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