

Commemoration of Human Rights Day

Special session of the permanent council

December 11, 2024 | Washington, DC

*Remarks by IACHR President, Commissioner **Roberta Clarke***

Today, Human Rights Day, we join the global community in reaffirming the importance of human rights for both individual life projects and societal well-being.

We say it as a mantra- we are all equal in dignity. But in fact, too many of our peoples have hard lives because we are disadvantaged by social and economic systems whose roots are embedded in inequality, in violence and in dispossession.

There is no avoiding the continuing failure to repair past harms and to address the demands of historically discriminated populations for equality, for freedom and autonomy.

Indigenous peoples, afro descendants, too many, are living below the poverty line, without access to productive assets such as land, technology and finance; without access to quality social services and justice.

As we close the 16 days of activism, it cannot be denied that despite real progress in law and policy development, violence against women and girls, in the home and the community, is the most prevalent form of violence, yet, the most under-policed. This violence and the impunity which characterizes it, signals the depth of the challenge to eliminate gender inequality.

We have girls, as young as 10 years old who are raped and experience forced pregnancy, unable to access health and social services. What of their life project, we must ask ourselves?

In every era, there are challenges, and so too now in these times. The Commission is closely monitoring the denial of political rights in Venezuela and seeks to provide information to member states that should contribute to international decision making.

The Commission also has the role to remind of the need to maintain democratic institutionality; especially the independence of justice operators.

Civil society organizations must have the civic and political space and protection to challenge power and to defend the rule of law and human rights. The Commission is concerned

about laws that seek to regulate human right defenders' organizations, beyond what is needed for good governance and accountability.

Our region's peoples demand inclusive development and security. The Commission is closely following the citizen security crises affecting the region, linked to the actions of organized crime and availability of weapons. There are tough decisions to be made as states address both the causes and consequences of this insecurity, but policy decisions which impact or limit human rights must be proportionate, legal, necessary and time bound.

We are particularly concerned about the continued state of insecurity in Haiti, manifested by gang violence, which is causing irreparable harm and imposing horror on all groups in society. Rape of women and girls is being perpetrated as a weapon by these gangs. We need resolve to put Haiti on a path to democracy and security.

This region has millions of people in mobility looking for peace and a chance for a decent livelihood. So many of them are in situations that amount to humanitarian crisis. We appreciate the insistence of states on regular migration and note that several countries have called on the Commission to facilitate dialogue on regional responses.

During its 65 years of existence, the Commission has, with member state support, established itself as an independent institution. Through its monitoring work, the review of individual cases and the promotion of rights, the Commission has contributed to the effective implementation of international standards in the countries of the region. But we cannot be complacent. The Commission accepts its obligations to improve efficiency and responsiveness.

Sometimes this role places the Commission at odds with member states who may consider the Commission to be too intrusive or insufficiently understanding the realities of the member state.

The Commission listens carefully to these concerns and must make course corrections as required. In addition, the Commission must keep the populations of the region in focus, those who are victims of civil and political rights violations; those who are locked out of economic opportunity; and those who are experiencing disproportionality the effects of the climate and conflict crises.

They say, we say, in the words of the theme of today, "Our rights, our future, right now."

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate President Hernandez on the 45th anniversary for the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. We recognise the strong institutional vocation of the Court, and its role in promoting the inter-American public order.

I also express the Commission's appreciation for the work of Judges Eduardo Ferrer MacGregor Poisot and Humberto Antonio Sierra Porto, who complete their terms as judges of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

The mission of Inter-American Human Rights System is as essential today as it was at the time of its creation. On this new Human Rights Day, I invite you all to continue to defend and strengthen our regional system.