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MINUTES OF THE FOURTH REGULAR SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CIM 2019-2022

On June 15th 2021, Mayra Jiménez, President of the CIM 2016-2019 and Minister of Women for the Dominican Republic, opened the Third Regular Session of the Executive Committee of the Inter-American Commission of Women 2019-2022 conducted virtually through the platform Zoom. The following CIM Executive Committee members attended the session: the Dominican Republic (Presidency) Canada, Colombia, and Panama (Vice-presidencies), and Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Suriname (Members).¹ This constituted the quorum of five Member States necessary for the Committee to begin its deliberations (see list of participants in Annex 1).

The President of the CIM opened the session, highlighting the need for a gender approach during pandemic times, to position gender dimensions on the agenda to close gaps and increase women's political participation, and to work toward parity in all areas of influence. She recalled the virtual training for electoral candidates organized by the CIM in Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico and soon in Paraguay. She concluded her introduction by recognizing the need to strengthen the CIM as a resource that benefits all women in the region.

As Item 1 of the meeting agenda, the President proceeded with the consideration of the Agenda (CIM/CD/doc.13/21) and the Organization of Work (CIM/CD/doc.14/21) of the meeting, which were adopted without modifications.²

The President then proceeded to Item 2 of the approved agenda, the Strategy for Strengthening the CIM: Political Analysis and Activity Report (CIM/CD/doc.15/21). Alejandra Mora Mora, the Executive Secretary of the CIM took the floor to present the Activity Report of the President and the Executive Secretariat of the CIM (CIM/CD/doc.15/21 Rev.1). In particular, the Executive Secretary emphasized:

- The advancement of knowledge generation and dialogue by the CIM in its six publications on the differentiated impacts of COVID-19 on the lives of women,³
- The role of the CIM in calling attention to the negative and differentiated impacts of COVID-19 on women's lives in the region. She recognized that countries are making some specific efforts in this regard, but that gender mainstreaming is still lacking in their public policies.

¹ Canada, Colombia and Ecuador were represented by Alternate Delegates, as eventually were Costa Rica, Mexico and Panama when their respective Principal Delegates were obliged to leave the meeting before its conclusion.

² All of the documents considered or presented at the meeting are available at:

<http://www.oas.org/en/cim/committee.asp>

³ Available at: <https://oas.org/es/CIM/COVID-19.asp>

- The increase of CIM followers on social networks and its amplified influence in times of increased digital presence - Twitter (85%) and Facebook (52%), the work of the Goodwill Ambassador, singer Fanny Lu (Colombia), and the effort to participate in new spaces.
- Strengthening women's political participation and leadership with a focus on parity, and the importance of including women in post-COVID decision-making positions. She highlighted the Course for Electoral Candidates mentioned above, and the positive results of parity in the Congress of Mexico and the Constituent Assembly of Chile.
- The lack of legally binding instruments addressing women's economic rights within a framework of sustainable integral development. The sectors most affected by equity gaps were identified in order to delve into this work from a gender perspective: tourism, the private sector, unpaid care, domestic work, technology, the informal economy and the rural economy.
- The dialogues promoted on public policy around caregiving, women's participation in labour unions, the importance of parity, domestic work, and violence in the workplace.
- The need to deepen the conceptual and methodological approach to gender mainstreaming, and the support of the CIM to the National Women's Machineryes, based on the work carried out in Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and other countries. What does gender mainstreaming mean in this process? What does it mean to bring differentiated impacts into different spaces? She highlighted the virtual course prepared by the Government of Canada and the CIM, "Introduction to Gender-Based Analysis Plus" (GBA+) to strengthen capacities in this regard.
- The passing of twenty years since the adoption of the Inter-American Program on the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality (IAP) and the commitment to parity by the OAS General Secretariat (GS/OAS) and its Member States. The evaluation of the IAP shows the resistance and also the achievements within the OAS with respect to gender issues.
- The creation of an inclusive communication guide in Spanish⁴ and trainings organized with personnel from the communication, conference, translation, and other relevant sections of the GS/OAS.

After taking the official photo of the meeting, the President invited delegations to ask questions about or comment on the report submitted. The Delegates of Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Canada, Peru, Suriname and the Dominican Republic spoke to express their appreciation for the report and to highlight the work of the CIM in times of pandemic. Additionally:

The Delegate of **Mexico**:

- Highlighted some of the results of the Generation Equality Forum process, led by Mexico and France together with UN Women, and notified that she would share the report with the results.
- Shared some of the virtual experiences of global dialogue on gender mainstreaming and the call to strengthen National Women's Machineryes.

⁴ Available at: <http://www.oas.org/es/cim/docs/GuiaComunicacionInclusivaOEA-ES.pdf>.

The English version of the Guide is currently in production and will be published during the latter half of 2021.

- Underscored the event on March 29 on institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, which was an opportunity to share good practices and strengthen links with feminist civil society groups.
- Invited delegates to follow up on the work of the forum and participate in the event in Paris from June 30th to July 2nd.
- Mentioned the creation of the Global Alliance for Care with UN Women and the Forum, with an emphasis on co-responsibility for caregiving, and invited Delegates to be part of the partnership.

The Delegate of **Costa Rica**:

- Highlighted the need to think about the issues of climate change, political violence and digital technology and further strengthen the CIM spaces.

The Delegate of **Panama**:

- Emphasized the decline in women's rights as a result of the pandemic, noting that inequalities already existed before the crisis and that we cannot allow a return to “normal”, but create a “new normal” founded on gender equality.

The Delegate of **Canada**:

- Highlighted the best practices of the GBA+ training and confirmed that it had already been translated into Spanish and was available on the website of the Educational Portal of the Americas of the OAS.
- Also underscored the success of the Generation Equality Forum in Mexico and announced that they will participate in the forum in Paris.
- Applauded the CIM's increased level of interaction and coordination.

The Delegate of **Peru**:

- Reiterated the need to strengthen the national women's/gender machineries precisely to confront times of setback, such as the current COVID-19 crisis.

The Delegate of the **Dominican Republic**:

- Urged the CIM to motivate training processes for the Ministers of Women of the region that have recently begun their mandates, to rapidly strengthen their positioning toward the national, regional, and international levels in their respective national machineries.
- Spoke of violence against women in the Dominican Republic in times of confinement and the strategic plan of the State to combat it. She also highlighted the creation of the draft law that will increase the budget of the Ministry of Women to finance 12 shelters for women victims of violence.
- Reported that the State passed a new law banning early/child marriage and shared that she is very confident that there will be a budget increase for a decent housing plan for women.

The Executive Secretary thanked the Delegates for their comments and for their leadership in the process of strengthening the CIM.

Subsequently, the President introduced Item 3 of the Agenda, opening a process of reflection on the CIM Strategic Plan for the period 2022-2026. She stressed that the Plan represents an opportunity to assess the progress of the last period (2016-2021), expand and deepen certain areas, and identify new issues of special concern. She mentioned the position of the CIM, its strengths and the challenges presented by the lack of financial and human resources of the OAS and the CIM. She emphasized a diverse and pluralistic plan to promote participation and dialogue spaces. She also proposed to resume Agreement 1 of the period 2016-2019 which refers to the strengthening of an informal communication mechanism between the members of the Executive Committee and the Executive Secretariat of the CIM, promoted by the President of the CIM.

As an introduction to the plan, the Executive Secretary made general mention of the suggested approaches: democracy, women's leadership and parity, women's economic rights and sustainable integral development (reiterating that there are no international legal instruments in this field), the privileged space that gender mainstreaming must have and the need for negotiation (the art of knowing the subject and what the process of mainstreaming means), and internal planning/mainstreaming. She mentioned the need to confront the growing tensions around gender equality and associated terminology with clear and strong arguments and affirmed the importance of linking dialogues on intersectionality and gender mainstreaming.

Following the presentation of the Executive Secretary, the President gave the floor to delegations to ask questions or to comment, reminding them that it would not be their last opportunity to discuss the new Strategic Plan. In this regard:

The Delegate of Peru:

- Stressed the importance of clarifying the conceptual framework around gender mainstreaming. She expressed concern that different government sectors or other actors may devalue specific spaces for women (e.g. National Machineries) if they see that their own ministries/institutions already include mainstreaming, she considered it essential to strengthen specific institutions and agencies through a more precise frame of reference.
- Requested that the Strategic Plan policies and recommendations be accompanied by affirmative and specific actions for their fulfillment.
- Underscored the need to engage in dialogue with feminist groups in the region.

The Delegate of Panama:

- Reiterated her concern over the setbacks caused by the pandemic and the particular vulnerabilities that women have due in the context of COVID-19.
- Considered it important to include the issue of caregiving in the plan, for the design of a roadmap and public policies on the matter.
- Reaffirmed the need to increase women's leadership and political participation, as well as address economic issues such as access to credit, financial services and the wage gap.
- Added that there is a digital divide that prevents women's access to knowledge and information and that it must be considered in the Plan.

The Delegate of Canada:

- Highlighted the importance of gender mainstreaming in the impact analysis of COVID-19 and spoke about the need for a feminist recovery that addresses gender-based violence.
- Also stressed the need for dialogue with feminist organizations.

Following the comments, the President moved to Item 4 on the Agenda, the Route to the 51st OAS General Assembly (GA/OAS) on expanding the mandate in the area of women's economic rights. She reported that the meeting will take place on November 11th and 12th 2021, tentatively in person in Guatemala, and reminded that it is an opportunity to assess the work of the previous period and include issues of concern on the agenda for the next session.

The Executive Secretary commented on the possibility of creating model laws, specific international declarations or a GA/OAS mandate on women's economic rights that is binding for States. After her introduction, the President invited delegates to ask questions or comments. The Delegate of Costa Rica agreed with the Executive Secretariat's proposal. Moreover:

The Delegate of Ecuador:

- Highlighted the great challenges that remain after the COVID-19 crisis and the need to resolve its consequences. She strongly agreed with the proposal of the Executive Secretariat.

The Delegate of **Peru**:

- Stated that the proposal was relevant to combating discrimination and should be a priority.
- Considered that the mandates are very general and that they should have more imperative components.

The Delegate of **Canada**:

- Shared that there are already international instruments dealing with economic and development issues, but admitted that compliance with them is problematic.
- Recommended that the CIM coordinate with other organizations already working on economic and development issues.

The President proceeded to Item 5 of the Agenda, the Route to the 9th Summit of the Americas: Women's Leadership. She noted that the Summit is scheduled to be held in-person in the US in early 2022, but this depends on the public health situation. She stressed that it is the highest level strategic space of the OAS. She recalled the establishment of the Inter-American Task Force on Women's Leadership at the last Summit (Lima, 2018) and recognized the importance of the Task Force and its impact on strategic spaces. She regretted that the 2022 Summit will have only one woman Head of State/Government, the Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley, and insisted that the Summit represents a unique space to position parity and women's leadership, and an opportunity for the CIM to play a leading role and specific mandates on this topic.

After her introduction, the Executive Secretary took the floor to expand upon the main ideas of the CIM. Firstly, and in follow-up to the mandates of the 8th Summit, she mentioned the issue of corruption and the importance of viewing it from a gender perspective, recognizing that women are also involved in corruption, but on a much smaller scale than men, and that mainstreaming efforts must make victims and actors in corruption visible. She stressed the importance of creating an agreement or paragraphs on women's leadership as part of the final Summit agreements. The President subsequently offered the floor to the Delegates to make comments and ask related questions:

The Delegate of **Canada**:

- Was proud to support the CIM as the Secretariat of the Task Force and supported the incorporation of women's leadership into the Summit.

The Delegate of **Ecuador**:

- Supported the initiative of the Executive Secretariat and stressed the importance of waiting to know the precise theme of the Summit in order to incorporate the topic in a decisive way.

In the absence of any further comments, the President moved to Agenda Item 6, "Other Matters" and gave the floor to the Executive Secretary, who introduced the issue of the 95th anniversary of CIM. She suggested the creation of an audiovisual instrument that would give visibility to the CIM's work and contributions to multilateralism over its 95 years of existence. The President opened the space for comments. As there were no interventions by the Delegates the meeting moved on to the last item on the agenda, the adoption of the agreements of the meeting.

The President gave the floor to the Executive Secretary to read the agreements made. Following her reading, the President invited the Delegates to make comments. The Delegates of Peru, Costa Rica, Canada and Panama commented that they agreed with the proposed agreements, in addition:

The Delegate of **Peru**:

- Recommended a review of the wording and use of language in Spanish.

The Delegate of **Colombia**:

- Recommended the omission of the term “legal” from Agreement 4, noting that it implies a legal responsibility and that not everything proposed in the agreement would be mandatory in nature.
- Stressed that not all countries have accepted the terms “intersectional” and “diversity” and that using them could cause problems in negotiating texts with some governments.

The Delegate of **Canada**:

- Recognized the comment of the Delegate of Colombia, but expressed her desire to keep the word “intersectional,” due to the leadership of the CIM in that topic, despite the fact that not all States agree.

The Delegate of **Panama**:

- Also considered the use of the word "intersectional" important to guide the discussion from the Executive Committee, and she supported the proposal of the Executive Secretariat.

The **Executive Secretary of the CIM**:

- Clarified that the issue of women's economic rights does not have legally binding international instruments, which represents a failing in the region because public policies exist, but not legal instruments. She stressed that the concept “legal” was understood in the broad sense and considered that it should be retained in the document.

The Delegate of **Costa Rica**:

- Made clear their support for the agreements proposed by the Executive Secretariat and the use of the words "intersectional" and "legal."

The Delegate of **Suriname**:

- Commented that she could not give feedback or make comments on the agreements because she did not have the English version yet. She committed herself to reviewing the document in English and making comments afterwards.

The Delegate of **Panama**:

- Declared her support for the word “legal” with the justification that the OAS should aim towards more and be concrete.

The Delegate of the **Dominican Republic**:

- Backed the reflection made by the Executive Secretary.

The Delegate of **Colombia**:

- Explained that the word “legal” implies a legally binding instrument, and that model laws, declarations and recommendations are not obligatory, however, the addition of “legal and political” (proposed by the Secretariat) resolved her concern.

The **Executive Secretary of the CIM**:

- Confirmed that there was an English version of the agreements but that it could not be shared on the screen at the same time as the document in Spanish and offered to put it up for immediate review.

Despite the proposal of the Executive Secretariat, the President decided that due to time constraints it was better to send the document in English to the English-speaking countries for review and comment after the meeting. The agreements were adopted by the Delegations as follows:

Agreement 1

Having seen the Activity Report of the President and the Executive Secretariat of the CIM, contained in document CIM/CD/doc.15/21:

- a. Continue strengthening the informal communication mechanism between the members of the Executive Committee and the Executive Secretariat of the CIM, promoted by the President of the CIM; and
- b. Encourage Member States to actively participate in the preparation of the CIM Strategic Plan 2022-2026.

Agreement 2

Instruct the Executive Secretariat of the CIM, within the framework of the work carried out to highlight the gender dimensions of COVID-19, to continue generating knowledge and practical recommendations on the situation of women in the post-pandemic period of economic and social recovery and reactivation, from a gender and intersectional perspective.

Agreement 3

Pursuant to the positioning and work advanced on democratic parity, request that the Executive Secretariat of the CIM create and participate in advocacy spaces, generate knowledge, identify good practices, and advance dialogue on how to achieve parity everywhere and by result, sustainable in all areas of political, economic, and social life, and to:

- a. identify existing gaps and develop concrete legal and political tools (declarations, recommendations, model laws, etc.) to advance equality and the presence of women in all spaces of political life, and promote other concrete measures aimed at advancing the full and equal participation of women,
- b. support the States to promote conditions in which political rights are exercised and the agenda for equality is incorporated,
- c. promote the sharing of good practices in the region and elevate them to the inter-American dialogue,
- d. strengthen alliances that allow for the achievement of these mandates,
- e. promote the continuity of work and progress in the generation of processes of economic, social and political transformation on the quality of democracy for the consolidation of electoral democracy through the promotion of parity everywhere, and
- f. elevate this work to the Fifty-First Regular Session of the OAS General Assembly (November 11-12, 2021), during a dedicated advocacy space.

Agreement 4

Request that the Executive Secretariat of the CIM, within available resources, in order to strengthen the inter-American legal framework on the economic rights of women:

- a. identify existing gaps and develop tools and strategies (recommendations, model laws, etc.) to advance towards equality and access to the economic empowerment of women,
- b. work in coordination with other international and inter-American entities in order to ensure the complementarity of this work; and
- c. elevate this work to the Fifty-First Regular Period of Sessions of the OAS General Assembly (November 11-12, 2021), during a dedicated advocacy space.

Agreement 5

Request that the Executive Secretariat of the CIM present to the Executive Committee of the CIM 2019-2022, a concrete proposal of the CIM Support Strategy to States for the Integration of the Gender and Diversity Approach in Public Policy.

Agreement 6

Request that the Executive Secretariat of the CIM, in the process of preparing the Strategic Plan of the CIM 2022-2026, identify: i) existing evidence and data gaps; ii) regional priorities from multiple stakeholders; and iii) create spaces for dialogue and exchange to give voice to the Delegates, as well as other strategic actors such as other instances of the State, civil society, regional and international systems and academia, that generate a comprehensive view of the proposed lines of work.

Agreement 7

In preparation for the Ninth Summit of the Americas (2022, United States), continue to position the importance of women's leadership for the achievement of the gender equality agenda with a view to:

- a. highlighting the underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions at the highest level in all the countries of the region,
- b. proposing and advancing a specific agreement on the importance of women's leadership in the final resulting document, and
- c. reporting on the articulation process and results of the Inter-American Task Force on Women's Leadership.

Agreement 8

Within the framework of the ninety-fifth anniversary of the CIM (2023), request that the Executive Secretariat of the CIM identify and develop concrete media products to highlight the history of the CIM and its contributions to the gender agenda and multilateralism.