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High-Level Meeting brings together top international authorities on violence against women and human rights

Washington DC, June 1, 2020. - On May 29, the High Level Meeting "Violence against Women and Girls and the COVID-19 Pandemic" organized by the [Inter-American Court of Human Rights \(IACHR\)](#), the [Inter-American Commission of Women \(CIM/OAS\)](#) and the [Follow-up Mechanism to the Convention of Belém do Pará \(MESECVI\)](#) was held, with the participation of more than 2,300 people connected through the different platforms.

The panel included Alejandra Mora Mora Mora, Executive Secretary of the CIM/OAS; Dubravka Simonovic, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences; Tatiana Rein Venegas, Chair of the Committee of Experts of the MESECVI; Lucy Asuagbor, Special Rapporteur on Women's Rights of the African Commission on Human Rights; and Marceline Naudi, Chair of the Expert Group on Actions against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence of the Council of Europe.

"We know that since this pandemic began, and even before, there had been great concern about the impact that this situation could have on women's lives. In previous pandemics the situation of women has been particularly dramatic, especially because of the difference this has on the impact on their lives," said Judge Elizabeth Odio Benito.

"On this occasion we have had a combination of efforts that have put us on the front line as women where we now find ourselves. The work done by both national and international organizations to analyze the seriousness of domestic and sexual violence against women during the pandemic is remarkable," said the President of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

For her part, CIM/OAS Executive Secretary Alejandra Mora Mora noted that *"the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened gender inequalities. Despite the fact that many of the public sector's functions have been transferred to the private sphere, the sexual division of labor continues to operate to the detriment of women, producing a crisis of care and an upsurge in violence against women. Staying at home is different for women, so it is necessary that the themes of caregiving and comprehensive measures to protect women victims of violence be the central focus of the policies that are being taken in the management of the pandemic,"* said Mora.

"It is important to join efforts from the United Nations System and regional mechanisms such as the European, African and Inter-American systems in the fight against violence against girls and women. We are in the midst of this crisis and it is necessary to remind States of their obligations to respect women's rights during the pandemic," said Simonovic, UN Special Rapporteur.

"Indeed, given the confinement of women and the entire population to prevent infection, there has been an increase in situations of physical, psychological and economic violence, and the most serious, femicides. There has been an increase in the femicide rate of up to 25% in the countries of the region. We are seeing an increase in violence against women, but many times they are unable to file complaints," said the President of the Committee of Experts, Tatiana Rein, when presenting a series of recommendations generated from the MESECVI.

"When one looks at the measures taken by most governments in Africa, they do not understand the dimension of addressing the situation against women in this pandemic. When you look at the statistics, there is no mention of how women are suffering from this particular pandemic," said the Special Rapporteur on Women's Rights of the African Commission on Human Rights.

Presenting an X-ray of the European situation, Marceline Naudi, noted that *"Millions and millions of women are experiencing this situation in the world. We at the Council of Europe have asked States for information on how they have handled the situation of violence against women during the pandemic. Most of the States indicated that they have taken special measures to prevent violence against women within the pandemic,"* said the Chair of the Group of Experts on Actions against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

Concluding the activity, Judge Odio made a call to continue with the work between the different national and international levels to fight against impunity. *"These enormous problems for girls and women have never received the necessary political attention. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has been concerned about the different aspects of the impact of the pandemic on human rights, and therefore issued in early April the Declaration COVID-19 and Human Rights. Priority should be given to addressing this challenge from a human rights perspective, working in an integrated manner among the various mechanisms of international cooperation,"* said Judge Odio Benito.

[Watch the full video.](#)

The [CIM/OAS](#) is the region's main political forum for the recognition of women's human rights and gender equality. Since its creation in 1928, the CIM has played a predominant and strategic role in the promotion of women's rights in the hemisphere.