

## **MEXICO CITY CONSENSUS**

**Offprint of the report of the Ninth Session of the Regional Conference on Women in  
Latin America and the Caribbean**

Mexico City, 10-12 June 2004

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The Governments of the countries participating in the ninth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean,

Gathered in Mexico City from 10 to 12 June 2004,

Recalling that next year will mark the thirtieth anniversary of the United Nations World Conference of the International Women's Year (the first of the world conferences on women), held in Mexico in 1975; the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women; and the fifth anniversary of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", of the Millennium Summit and of the eighth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean,

Considering that at the eighth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Lima, Peru, in February 2000, it was agreed that the implementation of the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean should be extended beyond 2001,

Bearing in mind that the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean is a subsidiary organ of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and that its Presiding Officers, at their thirty-fifth meeting, agreed that the ninth session of the Conference should focus on reviewing the implementation and fulfilment of international and regional agreements and on the analysis of two central themes of strategic importance to the region: (i) poverty, economic autonomy and gender equity and (ii) empowerment, political participation and institution-building,

Acknowledging the contribution of the women's movement, in all its manifestations, to the development of public policies with a gender perspective in the region, taking racial, ethnic and generational diversity into account, and, in particular, to the development of machineries for the advancement of women at the international, regional and national levels,

Highlighting the significant contribution women make towards reducing poverty and strengthening democracy, gender equality, social justice and development in the countries of the region,

Voicing their concern about the negative social effects of structural adjustment policies and, under certain circumstances, free trade, one of whose dimensions is the fragmentation of social policies, and about heavy external debt service obligations,

Recognizing that the benefits and costs of globalization are inequitably distributed, both within and between countries, and that developing countries face special difficulties in meeting this challenge,

Acknowledging the progress made in the areas of legislation, education, health, labour, measures to end violence, sustainable development and the design of public policies that promote gender equity,

Recognizing that this progress is insufficient and that efforts and available resources must be redoubled if the countries are to meet their common goals and objectives, given the multiple obstacles they continue to face in this regard,

Further recognizing the importance of promoting and strengthening affirmative actions for empowering rural, indigenous, Afro-descendent, young and elderly women and for increasing their access to resources,

Deploring the various forms of violence and their manifestations against women, adolescents and children in the region,

Recognizing the magnitude of migration in the region and the need to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of migrant men and women, while acknowledging the importance of remittances as a major source of foreign exchange in migrants' countries of origin, as well as the positive contribution migrants make to the societies that receive them,

1. Welcome the document prepared by the secretariat, entitled "Roads towards gender equity in Latin America and the Caribbean", and recognize that, as it represents the outcome of a process of consultation with representatives of the States members of the Conference, which included five subregional meetings, two of which were conducted using communication technologies, it reflects an approach that is shared by the Latin American and Caribbean Governments;

2. Reaffirm the agreements adopted at the three subregional preparatory meetings for the Caribbean, Central America and Mexico, and South America, held in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Honduras and Brazil, respectively, to provide inputs for this ninth session of the Conference;

3. Also reaffirm our commitment to the objectives set out in the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995), the Plan of Action of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Durban, 2001) and the Millennium Declaration (New York, 2000) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, and to all agreements reaffirming Governments' adherence to this international agenda;<sup>1</sup>

4. Reiterate that the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Caribbean Community Plan of Action and the commitments referred to in paragraph 3 above is an essential contribution to the achievement of the development goals contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration;

5. Note with satisfaction that most of the national delegations accredited to this ninth session of the Conference include parliamentarians and representatives of civil society, in accordance with the agreement adopted at the thirty-fifth meeting of the Presiding Officers;

6. The Governments of the countries participating in the ninth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean reaffirm our determination to:

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/CONF.177/20), Beijing, 1995; Report of the International Conference on Population and Development (A/CONF.171/13/Rev.1), Cairo, September 1994; Report of the World Summit for Social Development (A/CONF.166/9), Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995; Report of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (A/CONF.189/12), Durban, 31 August - 8 September 2001; Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2), New York, September 2000.

- (i) Adopt measures in all spheres, particularly the political, social, economic and cultural spheres, including legislative measures and institutional reforms, to ensure the full development and advancement of women of all ages, with a view to guaranteeing their access to justice and their exercise and enjoyment of all human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men;
- (ii) Strive to incorporate a gender perspective, taking racial, ethnic and generational diversity into account, into the design, implementation and evaluation of public policies, using follow-up and assessment instruments and guaranteeing transparency in public management to institutionalize accountability and disseminate information on progress towards the fulfilment of goals and the genuine civic participation of women;
- (iii) Ensure that the gender perspective, taking racial, ethnic and generational diversity into account, is fully included in the design and implementation of national development plans and public policies and programmes in all areas of State action, as well as in the process of budgeting resources to finance them;
- (iv) Design and implement public policies that help to redress the conditions of poverty affecting women in the region, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States, and that recognize the differential impact on men and women of the uneven distribution of the benefits and costs of globalization;
- (v) Adopt proactive policies to promote job creation, including affirmative actions for ensuring that men and women enjoy equal conditions in the labour market, and to strengthen women's entrepreneurial capacity, ensuring full respect for their rights at work and their individual rights, as well as their equitable access to the benefits of social protection;
- (vi) Recognize the economic value of unpaid domestic and productive work, afford protection and support to women working in the informal sector, particularly in relation to caregiving services for children and elderly persons, and implement policies for reconciling family and work responsibilities, involving both men and women in this process;
- (vii) Encourage States to include gender impact considerations, taking racial, ethnic and generational diversity into account, in developing their national policies and positions relative to the negotiation of bilateral and regional trade agreements, and to include gender equity and equality as a priority within national and regional trade capacity-building strategies;
- (viii) Review and assess policies and legislation with a view to strengthening the parental obligation to pay economic support for boys, girls and adolescents and other dependants, and exhort States to negotiate treaties for prosecuting and/or collecting monies due from those who evade these obligations;

- (ix) Implement education policies that meet the countries' development needs, encouraging education for all women and promoting their access to economic, technological and scientific activities conducive to their equitable participation in a globalized world;
- (x) Foster a culture of respect for the human rights of women and carry out wide-ranging programmes to raise awareness in this regard at all levels of education, and incorporate human rights education with a gender, racial and ethnic perspective at all levels of education;
- (xi) Review and implement legislation guaranteeing the responsible exercise of sexual and reproductive rights and non-discriminatory access to health services, including sexual and reproductive health, in accordance with the Lima Consensus;
- (xii) Intensify efforts for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS, while safeguarding the rights of women and girls living with the virus and guaranteeing access, without discrimination, to information, care, education and services for HIV/AIDS prevention;
- (xiii) Strengthen the full participation of women in environmental conservation and management with a view to achieving sustainable development;
- (xiv) Take steps to promote and protect the human rights of migrant men and women, in accordance with each country's constitutional precepts and the international instruments in force;
- (xv) Adopt the comprehensive measures needed to eliminate all forms of violence and their manifestations against all women, including domestic violence, sexual abuse and harassment, incest, sexual exploitation and the trafficking and smuggling of women and girls, forced prostitution, murder, systematic rape and violence in situations of armed conflict, among others, and to eliminate unilateral measures contrary to international law and the Charter of the United Nations;
- (xvi) Promote all women's access to information and communication technologies as a means of eradicating poverty and fostering development;
- (xvii) Enhance the development of an information system based on statistics disaggregated by sex, with a view to effectively mainstreaming a gender perspective, taking racial, ethnic and generational diversity into account, in all government programmes and policies, placing special emphasis on the issues of poverty, unpaid work, time use, gender-based violence and international migration;
- (xviii) Design and revise laws to ensure that, where private ownership of land and property exists, women are accorded full and equal rights to own land and other property, including through the right to inheritance, and undertake administrative reforms and other necessary measures to give women the same right as men to credit, capital, appropriate technologies and access to markets and information;

- (xix) Guarantee that national machineries for the advancement of women are provided with financial and human resources, build their political capacity and consolidate their institutional status at the highest possible level to ensure that they can fulfil their mandates efficiently and effectively;
- (xx) Develop closer ties of collaboration between national machineries for women and regional and international organizations;
- (xxi) Promote the full and equal participation of men and women at all levels of decision-making in the State, society and the marketplace, and promote the participation of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and women's organizations, in decision-making processes at the local, national, regional and global levels to progress in the construction and exercise of full citizenship by all the women of the region;
- (xxii) Develop instruments for monitoring and assessing public policies with a view to mainstreaming a gender perspective, taking racial, ethnic and generational diversity into account, in all State actions;
- (xxiii) Invite legislative bodies in the region to review their countries' laws with a view to harmonizing them with international instruments concerning human rights and the elimination of discrimination against women, children and adolescents;
- (xxiv) Urge Governments that have not yet done so to consider ratifying and effectively implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, as well as the Inter-American Convention for the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, and to adopt an effective mechanism for the implementation and follow-up of the latter Convention by the States parties thereto;
- (xxv) Promote international cooperation to support the activities of national machineries for the advancement of women to implement the Beijing Platform for Action, and urge United Nations organizations and specialized agencies to continue to support national efforts to ensure equal rights and create opportunities for women in the region through cooperation programmes, studies and research, among other initiatives, in accordance with their mandates;

7. Welcome the research agenda proposed in the document "Roads towards gender equity in Latin America and the Caribbean" and request the ECLAC secretariat to take the necessary steps to put it into practice, in collaboration with Governments in the region and other international organizations;

8. Declare that the Mexico City Consensus shall constitute the region's contribution to the work of the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-ninth session, to be held in March 2005;

9. Request the Chairperson to submit the present Consensus to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean for consideration at its thirtieth session, to be held in June and July 2004;

10. Thank the people and Government of Mexico for having provided the facilities for holding this session of the Conference and for their warm hospitality.



## Annex 1

**RESERVATION OF THE DELEGATION OF EL SALVADOR**

Mindful that our country joined the consensus of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt, in 1994, subject to its respective reservations, which we reaffirm on this opportunity together with those made at other conferences,

Whereas El Salvador is consistent with its democratic background, it joins the Mexico City consensus on the basis of its conviction that this document will be useful for the promotion and advancement of women. In this regard, we reaffirm our will to promote the content of the present Consensus subject to the following reservation:

In the case of the Mexico City Consensus, we reiterate our reservation concerning subparagraph 6 (xi) of the present declaration, specifically the sentence referring to “Review and implement legislation...” given that its wording is not compatible with the terms of article 1 of our Constitution relating to the human person, which “recognizes every human being as a human person from the moment of conception”.

In view of the foregoing, we request that the present reservation be incorporated in the document of the Mexico City Consensus.

We also request that this reservation be incorporated as a footnote of that document.

## Annex 2

**EXPLANATION OF POSITION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

While the United States has joined consensus on the “Mexico City Consensus,” the United States Government wishes to make the following Explanation of Position.

There is much in the Platform of Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing) and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo) that the United States supports. This support is not just theoretical. The United States is a leader in providing assistance to achieve many of the objectives of both Beijing and Cairo. In Fiscal Year 2003, the U.S. Government provided about \$1.82 billion for health programs. Besides family planning and reproductive health, most of this went to HIV/AIDS, child survival, and maternal health. As you know, President Bush’s Emergency Plan for AIDS relief is being implemented. That plan will provide \$15 billion over five years to expand prevention and treatment programs. Of this, \$9 billion will be new money. Funding for family planning and reproductive health has amounted to between \$424 million and \$446 million over the last four years, a substantial increase over the four preceding years. Through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States also provided nearly \$474 million for education and training programs in developing countries, mostly for children’s basic education and literacy. These and other programs demonstrate the U.S. Government’s clear and action-oriented commitment to many of the objectives of Beijing and Cairo.

The United States wishes to associate itself with the numerous delegations that made reservations or statements of interpretation on both the Fourth World Conference on Women and the International Conference on Population and Development, as well as other major UN conferences, as regards the terms “reproductive rights,” “sexual rights,” “reproductive health,” “reproductive health care and services,” “family planning services,” and “sexual health.” The United States understands that the word “reaffirming” in reference to the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, or any other reference to the UN conference documents does not constitute a reaffirmation of any language in those documents that could be interpreted as promoting abortion or the use of abortifacients, nor is it a denial of the United States’ firm support for the rights of conscientious objection for health care workers whose personal beliefs might dictate their refusal to perform or be involved in abortion or abortion-related services. The United States does, however, support the treatment of women who suffer injuries or illnesses caused by legal or illegal abortion, including for example, post-abortion care, and does not place such treatment among abortion services.

The United States fully supports the principle of voluntary choice with regard to family planning. Couples should be able to choose which family planning method to use, but also whether to use any method at all. In order to ensure such choices are truly voluntary, couples should be fully informed of the mechanisms, risks, and benefits of the full range of contraceptive methods prior to making choices regarding family planning methods. In no case should abortion be promoted as a method of family planning. Women who have had recourse to abortion should in all cases be given human treatment and counseling.

With regard to “services for HIV/AIDS prevention,” the United States fully supports a balanced approach, such as the ABC model: Abstinence, Be Faithful, and, when necessary, appropriate and safe use of Condoms. Based on a growing body of evidence from a number of developing countries, the

United States supports the ABC approach because it can target and balance A, B, and C interventions according to the needs of different at-risk populations and the specific circumstances of a particular country confronting the epidemic.

The United States interprets the reaffirmation of commitments to the objectives and targets set out in the Plan of Action of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Durban, 2001) as only applying to objectives and targets related to women, as the intended and proper scope of this particular declaration. Moreover, the United States Government made no commitments at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance which it can reaffirm.

With regard to the reference the call to “eliminate measures contrary to international law and the charter of the United Nations,” in Operative Paragraph 6 (xv) on violence against and sexual exploitation of women, the United States interprets it to apply to the Cuban Government’s policy of promoting sex tourism, prostitution, and sexual exploitation especially of Cuban women and girls. Such “unilateral measures” by Cuba, a matter of Cuban state policy defended publicly by its Maximum Leader, have the effect of promoting exploitation of women and a state-run industry to attract foreign tourists who systematically degrade women and girls, and are contrary to international law.

Finally, the United States requests the Secretariat of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to include a summary of this Explanation of Position and a clear reference to this Explanation of Position in the official record of this meeting, and to circulate the Explanation of Position as an official document of the Ninth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The United States also requests that the Consensus Declaration include the following footnote:

“The delegation of the United States understands that the terms reproductive and sexual rights and/or services should not be interpreted as endorsing or promoting abortion or the use of abortifacients.”

Annex 3

**RESERVATION OF THE DELEGATION OF NICARAGUA**

The delegation of the Government of Nicaragua:

1. Welcomes and endorses the Mexico City Consensus.
2. Welcomes with satisfaction the working document “Roads towards gender equity in Latin America and the Caribbean.
3. Reaffirms its commitment to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) and the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995).
4. Reaffirms the commitments and maintains the reservations as established at each of the Conferences referred to in the foregoing paragraph.

Request for footnote: With reference to the terms contained on page 2, paragraph 3 and page 4, paragraph 6, subparagraph (xi), Nicaragua accepts the terms provided that they do not affect its reservations.

**REPLY OF THE DELEGATION OF CUBA**

A declaration such as the one I have just heard can only stem from the most blatant disregard for truth and from a sense of impotence at the failure, these 45 years, of the economic, financial and trade embargo, of terrorist aggression of all types, of actions to break the unswerving will of the women, of the people of Cuba, to defend their freedom, their independence, their sovereignty, their self-determination and their socialism.

Out of respect for the delegations gathered here today, I cannot allow the calumnies expressed here to go unanswered.

To say that the Cuban Government promotes sex tourism or prostitution is yet another slur systematically thrown out to the world to distort the true picture.

The achievements of Cuban women and the role they occupy in society are a resounding demonstration of the reality in our country. The Revolution has ennobled Cuban women and those present here today are well aware of that fact.

It is really ludicrous and contradictory to hear the representative of the United States Government speak of the status of women, when the whole world has been appalled by news of the violations and tortures in Iraq, when Iraqi women have been defiled by the United States occupying forces. That is how they promote respect for women.

The embargo against Cuba is not a bilateral issue; it is applied extraterritorially and is used to impose United States laws on the rest of the world. The United States threatens Governments, imposes sanctions and pursues at the level of the entire globe those who wish to invest in, or negotiate with, Cuba. Laws such as the Torricelli Act and the Helms-Burton Act are used to establish and enforce such measures.

On 6 May, the President of the United States announced a new package of measures designed to interfere in our affairs, to try to destroy our people, our women.

I categorically reject the lies expressed by the United States delegation. This has been yet another demonstration of their policy of aggression.

Madam Chair,

I request that this statement be incorporated in full in the records of this ninth session of the Regional Conference as an annex to the Mexico City Consensus.