



ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN

PRESENTATION TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEMISPHERIC
SECURITY OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL

Thank you Mr. Chairman, for this very kind invitation and for the opportunity to address this distinguished assembly.

The Inter-American Commission of Women has a special interest in the issue of Hemispheric Security. Women are affected as much and sometimes more than men by issues linked to Hemispheric Security. They are, for example, the principal victims of trafficking in persons, defined as one of the new threats, concerns and other challenges by the Miami Meeting of Experts on Confidence and Security-Building Measures.

They are also particularly affected by conflicts in which civilians are the overwhelming majority of victims and where women are additionally targeted in gender-specific ways, such as rape and abduction. In times of conflict, women must assume tremendous responsibilities as heads of family and leaders of their communities. They may be displaced, murdered, and see their children die. They might also take up arms as combatants. In spite of women's presence in all aspects of conflict, prevailing social attitudes and tradition tend to exclude them from debate and decision-making at peace tables and in reconstruction processes that undoubtedly determine their lives and the lives of their families. The absence of women from these processes and their lack of

participation, undermines democracy and the development of society at large, and ignores women's very important role as peace builders. For peace efforts to be successful and efficient, women must be included in all aspects of decision-making.

This was recognized by the Security Council of the United Nations with the adoption in 2002, of Resolution 1325 which calls for strengthening the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution. The issue was also taken up by the Fifth Meeting of Ministers of Defense of the Americas, who, in their Declaration, specifically mentioned their satisfaction for the advances made in incorporating women to the armed forces and security forces in the Hemisphere's States and for the first "Seminar on the Role of Women in Peacekeeping Operations," held in Santiago, Chile on November 2002, within the framework of cooperation between the European Union and Latin America and in response to the mandate in UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

The CIM proposes that a gender perspective be incorporated into the issue of Hemispheric Security within the OAS. The Member States have on many occasions expressed their commitment to the full and equal participation of women in society and to the incorporation of a gender perspective in their policies and programs as a strategy for attaining gender equity and equality. This commitment was demonstrated by the adoption of the Inter-American Program for the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality (IAP) by the General Assembly of the OAS in 2000 and by the endorsement of this same instrument by the Heads of State and Government at the Quebec Summit of the Americas.

As Secretary General Gaviria has said “a gender equity agenda is imperative for building stronger, more prosperous democracies in the Americas: Strong democracies rest on the principle that all citizens have the opportunity to participate in political, economic, and civil society.” The Fifth Meeting of Ministers of Defense pointed out that democracy and its institutions constitute essential elements for hemispheric security.

A Resolution adopted at the XXXI Assembly of Delegates of the CIM, held last October in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, mandates that the CIM continue working in partnership with civil society organizations to attain the goals of the IAP and of the CIM Strategic Plan of Action, particularly in the areas of violence and trafficking, and to support and promote the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in the Hemisphere and the full participation of women in conflict prevention and peace-building. Pursuant to this mandate the CIM has begun to work with Women Waging Peace, an NGO that has global experience in the area of women, peace and security.

Within the context of the Inter-American Program, we reaffirm the importance of women’s equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of democracy, peace, and security and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to peace building and conflict prevention and resolution

We have submitted to the Chair of this Commission a proposal for language on the issue of women, peace and security that could be included in the Draft Declaration of the upcoming Special Conference on Hemispheric Security to be held in Mexico in May

of this year. We respectfully urge your consideration of this language in your deliberations. The CIM remains at your disposal to collaborate in any way you consider necessary to integrate gender as a cross cutting issue throughout the agreements, documents and commitments resulting from your deliberations..

On behalf of the President, Vice-President and Executive Committee of the CIM,
I thank you for this opportunity and for your kind attention.

1. See Appendix

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Declare:

That women often play a critical but under-recognized and under-valued role in conflict prevention, management, resolution and post-conflict reconstruction, as part of their unique contribution to democracy-building and good governance and to the construction of stable and secure societies where conflict is less likely to develop.

We note the need to highlight and support the essential contributions women make to confronting both conventional and non-traditional threats, concerns and other challenges to hemispheric security and underscore our commitment to increasing women's participation in all phases and at all levels of democracy-building, good governance and conflict resolution. In furtherance of that effort, we wish to endorse and advance the work of the Inter-American Commission of Women, the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy and other organs of the OAS in the field of women, peace and security. We further declare our support for the energetic implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 by the member states of the Hemisphere and for integrating gender as a cross cutting issue throughout the agreements, documents and commitments resulting from our deliberations."