

**COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
49th session**

HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship
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ON BEHALF OF THE RIO GROUP**

Mrs. President,

This session of the Commission on the Status of Women will allow us to evaluate the implementation of the commitments made at the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and in the final document of the XXIII Special Session of the General Assembly that today we fully reaffirm. We recognize that today they are still in effect and valid and we reiterate our commitment to continue with the implementation of their goals and measures.

Since the First Global Conference on Women that took place in Mexico in 1975, the United Nations has given a major impulse to the advancement and universal recognition of the rights of women and to the achievement of its instrumentation. However, the challenge has been enormous for the States. When trying to achieve equal opportunity for women in such basic areas as alimentation, education, employment, health, peace, justice, security and democracy, we have been confronted with deeply rooted social and cultural patterns but above all with different players who not only are indifferent towards these efforts but have tried to question the international commitments that we have achieved.

In order to achieve gender equality, our countries attach particular importance to the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, an important instrument that has wide international acceptance.

The Rio Group, in order to achieve the objectives agreed upon in Beijing, as well as in other summits and conferences of the United Nations, including the Millennium Summit, and the regional agreements, proposes to further strengthen of coordination among United Nations agencies, civil society and the States, taking into consideration the multidimensional and intersectorial character of the subjects on women. We, the international community must recognize that the obstacles regarding equity and equality are many and of different kind and in order to overcome them, the sustained and coordinated commitment of all participating players is necessary. We would like to underline the support that we have received from the different United Nations agencies in this area, especially UNIFEM and the U.N. Population Fund and urge them to, in accordance with their mandates, continue supporting the national efforts in favor of achieving equality between women and men in the promotion and protection of rights and the creation of opportunities for women in our region. We consider that they deserve an increase in their current resources.

The Rio Group countries highlight the work that INSTRAW has done in favor of women and support the strategic framework and the work program of the institute. At the same time, invite the international community to continue its support as integral part of the UN system in the promotion and advancement of women.

We urge the States to establish cooperation mechanisms in their regions in order to identify the main obstacles of the empowerment of women and thus be able to overcome it by specific strategies. In this respect we reaffirm the Lima Consensus, the Santiago Declaration and the Mexico Consensus, adopted in June, 2004 that contain specific measures in favor of women's rights.

We consider it fundamental to promote international cooperation for the support of activities of national mechanisms for the advancement of women for the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action.

The Rio Group countries reject the use of unilateral coercive measures as instruments of political or economic pressure against any country, but especially against developing countries because such measures are not compatible with international law and the United Nations Charter and they **impede** the full **economic** and social **development** of the population of the affected countries, especially women, children and persons with special needs.

Mrs. President:

Our great concern is the discrimination to which women are **subjected**. The **fundamental** role **of** women in the processes **of social transformation** and **as** a determining factor in the progress of our countries makes it necessary to end the discrimination that still affects them. In **several cases** women **are subjected to** multiple discrimination **due to different** factors such as gender, origin, culture, disability, age and poverty, among others. In our region for example, indigenous women and **afrodescendants** tend to live in greater poverty and that impedes them from fully exercising their rights. The Rio Group countries are aware of the necessities of these groups of women and of the prioritized attention that they require.

The Rio Group countries have made a commitment to promote full and equal participation of women and men at all levels of decision making of the State, society and the market and to promote the participation of civil society, including organizations of women, in the processes of decision making in the local, national, regional and global framework in order to advance the construction and exercise of full civil rights of all women in the region.

We consider it indispensable to work out measures that stimulate the transversalization of the gender perspective in public policies. The sustainable development of our peoples will only be possible in an fair, ample, democratic and inclusive society through the strengthening of institutions and based on social equity and gender equality.

The protection and promotion of human rights is an indispensable framework for us to approach such important subjects as gender equality, no discrimination and the elimination of violence that are the pillars of the objectives of the Declaration and Beijing Platform of Action. Our governments are committed to promoting a culture of respect for human rights of women and are impulsing public policies that guarantee the full exercise of these rights paying attention to their universality, integrity and indivisibility.

The acts of violence be it in the public or private life of women are a violation of their human rights. One of the principal goals of the countries of our region is to design adequate policies to eliminate all forms of violence against women, especially domestic violence, both physical and psychological. These policies must prioritize programmes to prevent and eliminate violence against women, the attention, treatment and recovery of the victims, integration of men and boys in those programmes, community campaigns of public education and the strengthening of social services. We will not tolerate any form of violence against women and girls.

We are concerned about the trafficking in persons, in particular women, girls and boys and their link to poverty, sexual, commercial, and laboral exploitation and the lack of opportunities. This phenomenon can only be prevented and eliminated by determined, coordinated and collective national and international action with the participation of countries of origin, transit and host countries, taking into consideration the eminently transnational character of this scourge and within the framework of the respect of the human rights of the victims.

The eradication of poverty is a priority challenge where it is indispensable to give women a central role in the **elaboration** of strategies and the development of their capabilities as well as the execution of policies and programs designed for such goal. Poverty has grown during the **past** years as well as **has become** more feminine **and** mainly in rural **areas**. This is due to several factors, such as lack of **access** to education, lack of land ownership as well as disparities based on gender and lack of resources, including the lack of access to financing. Thus countries of the region have committed themselves to work for **overcoming** poverty, including extreme **poverty**, increase the rates of feminine **employment** and increase the income of the **poorest** sectors with special emphasis on women.

The difficult economic situation that we face, due to the heavy burden of external debt and the negative social effects of adjustment policies, is an obstacle for the countries of our region to enter into a stage of **sustainable** development allowing economic growth and ensuring a more egalitarian distribution of its benefits. It becomes therefore indispensable to recognize the differentiated impact of globalization on women and men and the **assessment** of macroeconomic and structural adjustment policies, in order to correct the negative effects of such policies.

The Rio Group recognizes the role of women as development agents and their contribution to it. We understand that public policies are required to promote, in egalitarian conditions, the access to sources of production, to resources, credit and capacity building to increase production and employment. Governments of our region promote the creation of dignified employment, impulsing equality of conditions in the labor world among women and men, guaranteeing respect for labor rights of women and their access to the benefits of social protection. At the same time they understand that the recognition of the economic value of unpaid domestic work and actions to support women who work in the informal sector are required, as well as the promotion of shared responsibility of men and women in domestic work and in the care of children and the elderly.

We recognize the magnitude and importance of the migratory phenomenon of the region and the necessity to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental liberties of the migrants, with special emphasis on the situation and necessities of migrant women.

The Rio Group countries recognize the vulnerability of women and children regarding the HIV/AIDS pandemic and believe that this problem must be dealt with from an integral perspective. We recognize the need to guarantee individual, social, cultural and political rights of the persons who live with HIV/AIDS which are contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as in other international and regional commitments. The Rio Group countries are dedicated to the organization of awareness, prevention and treatment campaigns with especial attention to women and girls.

The Rio Group cannot but recognize the important role played by women in peacekeeping, peacebuilding and post conflict consolidation of peace in accordance with the purposes and principles established by the UN Charter. Contributions of women to peace processes and the creation of associations for peace have been widely recognized in different areas of the United Nations. We support the training of women in order to facilitate their more active participation in regional and international initiatives as agents of peace and condemn different forms of violence suffered by women and girls in conflict situations.

Mrs. President,

Our governments have incorporated crosscutting, interdisciplinary and participative approaches to design public policies whose results have already been gradually demonstrated during the last ten years since the Beijing Platform, since they have generated advances in the legal field, in the formulation of national plans of equality, in the establishment of laws on political participation quotas, in the creation of government mechanisms in favor of women and in the recognition of civil rights, among others. Also, the different meetings of women of Latin America and the Caribbean have allowed the exchange of experiences, sharing of good ideas and practices in order to face current challenges.

At the same time it can also be affirmed that there has been significant advance towards the consolidation of gender justice. We believe that the changes of most transcendence for women are the recognition and full exercise of their rights.

The Rio Group hopes that this review exercise that we undertake together will allow us to identify the areas where we still have pending tasks and to reflect together on the ways to overcome the challenges *for* the full implementation of the assumed commitments

Thank you very much.