

COLOMBIA



COLOMBIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statement

H.E. Mrs. Claudia Blum
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

Commission on the Status of Women
53rd Session

Item 3: Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

New York, 9 March 2009

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Mr. Chairman,

My delegation associates itself with the statements delivered by the Rio Group, the G77 and China, and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The analysis on equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men is an issue of special importance for Colombia, as well as the assessment of women's participation in State's decision-making processes. These are issues related to policies on employment, social protection, education and culture, and to the realization of women's fundamental rights, to which my country attaches high priority.

In Colombia, women have strengthened their active participation in public and productive life. The Government has acknowledged the difficulties affecting their inclusion in the labor market and is committed to implement development policies with a perspective of gender equity and equality of opportunities between women and men. In this context, reconciling work and family life has been defined as a key factor in promoting an equitable sharing of responsibilities in the family.

Strengthening programs of care for dependent persons is another of the key measures to support women and men in carrying out their household responsibilities.

In Colombia, these actions are focused on care for children and older family members. Among other initiatives, we can highlight the programs: Welfare Community Homes, Children's Homes, Community Kindergardens, and Infants and Preschoolers. Their implementation combines State support and community solidarity, in caring for children living in the same neighborhood, in the areas of nutrition, protection and individual development.

In Colombia, there are other programs that have significant impact on family welfare such as the School Restaurants program, and the Families in Action program that provides a direct monetary support to mothers, which is provided under the condition of fulfilling commitments in education and health for children.

On the other hand, the Government has encouraged the adoption of action plans by the private sector in order to facilitate the equitable distribution of family responsibilities of employees. In this area, last 6 March, twelve national business associations signed, in a meeting with the President of Colombia, the "Agenda for Labor Equality". With this agenda, they have committed to adopt measures to eliminate discrimination between women and men, and to contribute to reconcile work and family life. These action plans include support services to prevent women's desertion from work, such as flexible schedules and the provision of child care facilities. The agenda will have a steering committee in charge of verifying its implementation.

In 2002, Congress approved the first law on paternity leave which grants to the spouse or permanent partner some leave days for the care of newborn infants.

In addition, national statistical systems have been strengthened in order to make men and women's roles in households, and their contribution to the society from these spaces, more visible. In Colombia, the National Department of Statistics and the Observatory for Gender Issues have made significant progress in this area.

Mr. Chairman,

Women's participation in high positions of the State continues to expand in Colombia. The latest report on the implementation of the national Quota Law, indicates that in 2008, in the executive branch, 23% of the ministries, 29% of vice-ministries and 50% of presidential programs are headed by women. Female participation in senior positions in ministries is 48%. In entities of the judicial branch such as the General Prosecutor's Office, and in other autonomous bodies, the figure exceeds 30%.

In the legislative branch, currently, in the election for the period 2006-2010, women were elected for 12% of Senate's seats and 10.3% of the House of Representatives'

seats. The challenge is to advance at the regional and local levels, in order to increase the number of women elected as mayors, governors, and members of councils and departmental assemblies.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation would like to highlight the adoption of Law 1257 of 4 December 2008, which strengthens our regulatory framework on awareness, prevention and punishment of violence and discrimination against women. The adoption of this law provides more effective tools for ensuring the exercise of women's rights, preventing and addressing gender based violence, and strengthening protection measures and punishment.

This law establishes also guidelines for policies of the national government, departments and municipalities, and includes civil society participation. A monitoring committee, with the participation of women's organizations, will be established to make follow-up of its implementation.

Additionally, we would like to reiterate the importance of international cooperation in actions to further advance in gender equality and empowerment of women. In this regard, Colombia expresses its appreciation to the United Nations system and national governments such as Spain, for their support to our Comprehensive Strategy against Gender Violence 2008-2011. This project will contribute to the strengthening of institutions and social organizations, as well as educational communication and research in this field.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government of Colombia has reaffirmed its strong commitment to work for the advancement of women and gender equality, and to comply in this regard with the provisions of our National Development Plan 2006-2010. Public policies for democratic security, social equity and economic consolidation, have had positive impact on the advancement of women. Affirmative actions led by the Office of the Presidential Counsellor for Women's Equity, have shown specific results in the areas of employment and business development, political participation, education and culture, elimination of gender based violence, and in the defense of women's rights in the legal system. In order to consolidate these actions, the Government will continue to strengthen the joint work with the private sector, the media, educational institutions and NGOs. We think that this is a concrete contribution to advance this issue within the United Nations agenda and the fulfillment of the goals defined in the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Thank you very much.