

**STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION OF THE
INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN (CIM)**

**Presented at the Fourth World Conference on Women
Beijing, China - September, 1995**

**Resolution adopted at the fifth plenary session,
held on November 11, 1994**

WHEREAS the Fourth World Conference on Women will be held in 1995 in Beijing, China;

RECALLING:

The Plan of Action of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), "Full and Equal Participation by the Year 2,000", adopted by the Twenty-Third Assembly of CIM Delegates in 1986 by resolution CIM/RES. 103/86 (XXIII-O/86); and

The Inter-American Meeting to Evaluate the CIM Plan of Action, convoked to assess the advancement achieved by women since 1985 and to propose new strategies for the full and equal participation of women; and

HAVING SEEN document CIM/doc.32/94, Conclusions and Recommendations of the Inter-American Meeting of Evaluation of the CIM Plan of Action; "Full and Equal Participation of Women by the Year 2000" and the results of the detailed analysis conducted by Committee II,

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH ASSEMBLY OF DELEGATES OF THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN

RESOLVES:

1. To adopt the Strategic Plan of Action of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) which is attached to this resolution.
2. To present this plan of action to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to make it available as well to national and international fora convened to discuss matters related to promoting the advancement of women.

INTRODUCTION

1. The main thrust of action begun in the Decade of Women was to enlist more active and decisive participation of women of the member states of the Organization of American States (OAS) in the national development processes of their countries, both as agents of change and as beneficiaries of progress.
2. Over the last decade, major changes have occurred in the international arena, including a growing globalization and economic interdependence, basic technological innovations in all fields, particularly in communications, shifts in the world power structure, a growing and increasingly accentuated concern for the environment, and progress in improving the status of women, both in the individual countries and in the international community as a whole. These elements, together with new ways of relating between the

genders, make up a changed scenario, which must be considered in developing new strategies.

3. The set of objectives and strategies set forth in the Plan of Action is in line with a concept of sustainable and comprehensive development that incorporates political, social, cultural, and economic dimensions, is centered on people, embodies gender equity, takes into account the recommendations of Agenda 21, adopted in 1992 by the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), and guarantees a decent quality of life for present as well as future generations.
4. The Plan of Action is designed to improve the quality of life of women, based on the awareness that this will impact on society as a whole. Moreover, special attention has been given to taking into account the enormous diversity of the status of women in the region, including rural and urban considerations, cultural and ethnic pluralism, women in the various age groups, and marginal groups.
5. The Plan of Action is constructed from the advances and difficulties identified during the last decade, the results and recommendations of the national reports of the member states, and the results of the Inter-American Meeting to Evaluate the CIM Plan of Action, which was adopted in 1986.
6. In preparation for the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), the United Nations recommended that the national reports follow a single detailed format for each of the subjects under consideration. This would ensure a standard presentation for an overall and comparative analysis of data, as well as the identification of critical areas for attention and immediate strategies and actions for the future. In order to contribute to a more coordinated regional position, the Inter-American Commission of Women decided that these reports would be used for its own review process. It also agreed to provide additional funding for their preparation. The national reports received from the countries of the region were, in most cases, prepared under the direction of a national commission with the active participation of the respective CIM principal delegate. In many cases, significant efforts had to be made to gather gender-disaggregated data from various sources.
7. Guidance for preparation of the national and regional reports was provided by: the CIM-sponsored inter-American consultations; the results of the subregional meeting of the countries of the Caribbean, sponsored by CARICOM and the United Nations; the Regional Forum on Women in the Americas: Participation and Development, sponsored by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), in Guadalajara; the Sixth Regional Conference on the Incorporation of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean; the European Economic Commission's High-Level Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women, which included the participation of Canada and the United States of America; the Forward-looking Strategies approved by the Third World Conference in Nairobi, Kenya (July 1985); and networks of government agencies.
8. This Plan of Action will therefore focus on the participation and contribution of the women of the OAS member states to the political, legal, social and economic processes of their countries, on the present status of their involvement, and the actions that will be essential to securing and strengthening their role to the year 2000. The Plan of Action is structured along the following areas:
 - Participation of women in the structures of power and decision-making

- Legal and institutional framework
 - Work
 - Education
 - Health
 - Elimination of violence
 - Eradication of poverty
 - National machinery responsible for the advancement of women
 - Regional cooperation
 - Migration and women in areas of conflict
9. Although the basic importance of each topic addressed in this Plan of Action is recognized, the CIM assigned priority for the next five years to the participation of women in the structures of power and decision-making education, the elimination of violence, and the eradication of poverty.
10. In addition, it identifies as operating objectives for this period strengthening the national governmental institutions and/or structures responsible for promoting, coordinating, and executing programs and policies on women and the development of horizontal cooperation in the region.
11. The final objective of achieving sustainable development with gender equity cannot be attained until gender relations and the entire system of sociocultural patterns that casts women in a subordinate exclusionary role, inconsistent with their ability to take part in modern society under equal conditions, has changed. In this sense, the proposed Plan of Action is directed to contributing decisively to the achievement of those changes.
12. Governments and organizations of the inter-American system, including the specialized agencies, are urged to give this Plan of Action their full support and to work toward its implementation. They are also urged to ensure that the Plan of Action be disseminated widely, particularly to relevant institutions and women's grassroots organizations.

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE STRUCTURES OF POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

The integration of women into the full range of the decision-making process, including the highest levels of power in the state, is the only means to attain full participation in the development process, their status of equality vis-à-vis society, and their contribution to social peace and the enjoyment of that state. The right to elect and to be elected to office by participating in the electoral process and in its direct and indirect results is the very essence of the rights of citizenship and is both the basis for, and the culmination of, all other social rights and duties.

The full recognition of the rights of women as citizens has failed to achieve their incorporation into national political life on an equal footing with men. Despite women's active participation in political parties and electoral groups and processes, and notwithstanding some progress made in the Decade of Women as to their participation in the various areas of public life, prejudices and customs persist that limit their participation in public life to those that society arbitrarily has identified as being "appropriate" for them as women.

A. Assessment

1. Universal suffrage, under equal conditions for both sexes, was set forth in the constitutions and legislative instruments of the countries of the Americas in most instances, excepting a few that already had recognized these fundamental rights earlier, in the period between the end of the 1940s and the early 1960s.
2. Women traditionally have participated in diverse civil movements and the number of organizations in civil society that promote the interests of women has increased markedly in the past decade. Despite the trend observed in much of the region toward greater participation of women in parties and trade unions, and, on occasion, in organizing and operating working women's unions, they continue to join political parties and trade union associations in distinctly varying degrees, depending upon the countries concerned. Common traits may be identified in regard to that membership, the most salient of these being the persistent dearth of women in political and trade union leadership positions.
3. Another important feature common to most countries is the continued existence of women's wings, branches, or committees, through which many women join organized political life. Many women view these as one of today's effective mechanisms to advance their participation and to influence party decision-making.
4. As a result of only partial assimilation into political parties, there have been very few women candidates for elective positions throughout the Americas, in both absolute and relative terms. On the other hand, the female electorate, as large as the male electorate, usually participates heavily in electoral processes, although, in some countries, voter turnout among rural women continues to be very low.
5. According to worldwide statistics of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in the entire region of the Americas, women hold approximately 12% of the elected seats on national legislatures while the worldwide average is only 11%. On the other hand, the election of women to legislative or executive offices at the provincial and local levels is more frequent and their numbers appear to be increasing. In general, women find it difficult to access funding for electoral campaigns, although some countries have witnessed the emergence of special interest groups dedicated to attracting funding for women candidates.
6. In some countries, women have begun to organize around issues of specific interest to women and to challenge parties to be responsive to their concerns. In practice, the role of women, in general, consists of supporting programs and persons in political parties that do not always represent their interests.
7. Women, who, in the past, more frequently held cabinet positions in ministries of the social sector, such as education, health, labor, housing, and social welfare, have begun to hold key cabinet posts and senior positions, such as heads of the ministries of foreign affairs, interior, justice, defense, public works, and economy, central banks, agrarian reform administrations, and statutory boards. Nevertheless, women still hold far fewer of these positions than men.
8. In the judicial branch, women, who have in significant numbers turned to the study of law, have a relatively high and growing representation at the local judiciary level, although, again, most judges are men. The number of women on courts that have

broader jurisdiction is lower, and, still, only a few women sit on supreme courts or courts of equivalent rank.

9. It should be noted that, in the last two decades, governments have shown a greater inclination to address gender issues. Efforts have been undertaken to strengthen national machinery for the advancement of women so as to affect policy and planning decisions. Gender concerns have begun to be included in various national development plans.
10. Some member states have begun to put in place transitory or temporary measures and regulations to remedy long-standing situations of discrimination and thereby provide opportunities for women to participate in the decision-making process. These measures include setting targets for a certain proportion of women standing for election and at specific levels of government administration.
11. Some member states have adopted measures aimed at eliminating discrimination and sexual harassment in other arenas, such as in the workplace, in schools, and in the health sector.
12. Institutional and social structures continue to impede women's access to positions of power in all areas. Cultural stereotypes continue to influence the assignment of gender-specific roles to both women and men.
13. Although some member states have begun to adopt national plans to provide equal opportunities, government plans and social policies, for the most part, are not formulated from a gender standpoint that would promote true incorporation of women.

OBJECTIVE

To achieve the full and effective participation of women in all power and decision-making structures

B. Strategies

1. To attain the full incorporation of women into political life under conditions of equality, action must be taken at the institutional, cultural, and educational levels to overcome the sociocultural obstacles that impede or limit their participation, such as:
 - a. Conducting studies to pinpoint the barriers that impede or limit women's participation in politics;
 - b. carrying out campaigns through the media to eliminate stereotypical images of men and women by publicizing the diversity of the roles of women in our societies and their true contribution to development;
 - c. using the educational system to promote the elimination of stereotypical images of women and to provide training for women in fields that facilitate their access to political life;
 - d. promoting increased participation by women in decision-making processes through: support for women's and civil society organizations that represent women's interests; and promotion of participation by women's civil organizations in all stages of the political process;
 - e. achieving equality of opportunities for women and men in trade unions of the formal sector and associative enterprises in the informal sector; and

- f. establishing programs and mechanisms to expand equality of opportunities for women and men and to promote the attainment of equity, by designing policies that incorporate a gender perspective.
2. Transitory measures: the CIM should encourage actively the establishment of mechanisms that enable women to play a more active role in the leadership of political parties and social organizations, such as:
 - a. amendment of, or regulations for existing laws to achieve equal participation of women and men at all levels of government, and the setting of participation goals or establishment of other mechanisms that the member states consider pertinent; and
 - b. reform of electoral codes, party bylaws, and the structures of social organizations to achieve access by women to elective office, by establishing either minimum percentages or other mechanisms that the member states might decide.
3. Existing institutions should be used to promote causes of interest to women and to encourage their participation in the management of private and public activities. To that end, it would be advisable to work with women's groups and organizations, government agencies, political parties, and trade union organizations, to give priority to women's membership in political parties and unions, and to facilitate their access to leadership positions in both cases.
4. The CIM should urge the member states to increase the monitoring, evaluation, and adoption of mechanisms for the inclusion of gender equality in the policies implemented by the various public entities so that their effects will be lasting and sustainable.
5. The CIM should coordinate with the member states special efforts to see that both women and men receive training in disciplines associated with the exercise of politics. This would include political management, negotiation skills, strategic planning, leadership techniques, gender training, civics instruction, public speaking, and education in politics and trade unionism.
6. To establish training programs for rural women in various fields, such as organizational methodologies, participatory techniques, self-esteem, civil rights, and participation in decision-making, that will ensure the creation of conditions for achieving equality.
7. Special programs and efforts must be conducted to identify potential leaders among young women and to promote training in political skills.
8. To urge the member states to promote access by women to senior-level policy and decision-making positions in the international arena.
9. The CIM should promote the financing of studies and seminars for social and political leaders to make them more sensitive to the issues relating to the participation of women and to incorporate them as active advocates for change, and should promote the development of programs for consciousness-raising and gender-sensitivity training for government officials, both women and men, drawn from strategic areas of decision-making.

LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Women's rights are human rights. (Convention of Belém do Pará)

A. Assessment

1. From the time the CIM plan of action was developed in 1986 to date, legislation in the countries has continued to show progress for women in various areas, and many countries have enacted laws that protect women who have been subjected to family or domestic violence. Countries that recently have amended their constitutions have, in some cases, incorporated in them specific recognition of the rights of women and the family.
2. Legal provisions that discriminate against women, mainly in civil, labor, criminal and commercial law, still persist, as do traditional concepts of the role of women that underlie those national laws or court decisions that stand in the way of the full and effective equality of women under the law, including, for example, access to loans, land ownership, or jobs for women.
3. The progressive development of international standards of conduct to improve the legal status of women is reflected in the introduction of innovative legislation in the countries of the region, including the emergence of the *Ombudsman* in special offices for the protection of citizens, human rights, women, the indigenous population, ethnic minorities, the disabled, and consumers.
4. The process of ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has been almost completed in the region and very few reservations to it have been recorded. Moreover, other countries recently have moved to ratify United Nations human rights covenants that contain specific provisions relating to women. Progress continues in the region toward universal ratification of the Pact of San José.
5. With this recognition by the international community of women's rights as an integral part of human rights, the CIM is committed to pursuing its promotion of progress toward full legal equality for women. At the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in June 1993, a provision was adopted on "the equal status and human rights of women," as an important element of the Vienna Declaration and program of action. In addition, the program of action of the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development, adopted in September 1994 in Cairo, reaffirms this achievement in its principle 4, which states: "The human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights."
6. The Inter-American Commission of Women also has made its contribution at the international level by promoting and obtaining approval of the first treaty instrument to address specifically violence against women: the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, "Convention of Belém do Pará." The process of signing and ratification of this Convention is well under way in the region ⁽¹⁾ and is receiving much support from civil society organizations.

OBJECTIVES

- To eliminate all remaining legal provisions that discriminate against women from the legislation of the countries of the region.
- To adjust legal systems in the OAS member states to the international covenants, treaties, agreements, and declarations they have adopted and ratified concerning equality and non-discrimination against women, and introduce measures that guarantee their effective enforcement.

B. Strategies

1. To promote, where appropriate, constitutional amendments that will provide for full and effective equality of women and men.
2. To promote, where appropriate, changes in legislation to adapt the laws to changes in the constitutions and to eliminate any vestiges of legal discrimination against women.
3. To promote community participation in the process of preparing and adopting national legislation, particularly laws relating to the family and violence against women.
4. To promote the creation and expansion of legal mechanisms and procedures to ensure effective enforcement of the laws.
5. To promote protection of the rights of women and the family and, where appropriate, urge governments to legislate, if they have not done so already, the protection of the principle of family property and/or assets (**patrimonio familiar**) or other mechanisms designed to guarantee the rights of women and their children, particularly when couples separate.
6. To promote greater access by women to the judicial system through the expansion and improvement of judicial services.
7. To promote the creation of specialized services to address family problems in a comprehensive manner. Family courts, where they exist, must be dynamic and accessible to all, and, to that end, procedures should be streamlined and counseling services provided that will ensure effective access to the judicial system.
8. To develop and implement training and awareness programs on the rights of women and the impact that their decisions might have on them for judges, attorneys, and others responsible for the administration of justice.
9. To promote increased information, improved communications, and wide dissemination of laws on women and their rights in order to ensure that the rights of women are at the forefront of an agenda for action and that women and the public at large are fully aware of those rights.
10. To disseminate, in easily comprehensible language, the content of laws on women and the family, including, where appropriate, the translation of these laws into the first language of ethnic groups.

⁽¹⁾ As of November 11, 1994, 14 countries had signed the Convention of Belém do Pará and on October 11, 1994, the Congress of Bolivia voted unanimously for its ratification.

WORK

A. Assessment

1. In keeping with their increasing share in the work force, women's employment has increased both in absolute terms and in terms of their proportion of the economically active population. Nonetheless, women's work continues to be centered on activities in the service sector and on routine tasks in the industrial area. Despite increased training, women still hold only a small fraction of the highest executive positions. Available statistics show that women are subject to dual salary discrimination. On the one hand, the rate of pay for women workers in various segments of the economy is below that for men; on the other, women with an education equivalent to that of male counterparts earn less. In most countries, the corresponding data also indicate that women have a higher unemployment rate than men, indicating that they find it more difficult than do men to find paid work and that they are more vulnerable to layoffs.
2. In many parts of the region, particularly in the poorer areas, women generally find jobs in small-scale enterprises, the rural and urban informal sectors, home-based units, or domestic service, many of which are generally exempt or hidden from the employment and labor legislation of a country. Alternatively, women in search of a livelihood become self-employed, selling products such as fruit, vegetables, or their own services. In plantation and agricultural work, work done by women is not recognized and in many cases not regulated by law; their dual role as wage earners and homemakers leaves them with little opportunity to bargain for better conditions through workers' organizations. It is difficult for them to organize collectively, since their workplaces tend to be widely scattered.
3. Most of the countries of the region have adopted legislative measures to ensure equal pay for equal work and, in general, have ratified international agreements embodying that principle, although enforcement, in practice, is neither monitored nor required. It is necessary to strengthen enforcement practices and procedures. Similarly, national laws guarantee equal access to jobs, irrespective of gender. However, there are still provisions in labor legislation that are clearly discriminatory in areas relating to wages, conditions of work, social security coverage, etc. Under the guise of protection, women are frequently denied access to night shift work or "dangerous" or "unhealthy" jobs.
4. In most cases, unpaid work and domestic work are still not reflected in national accounts.
5. Labor statistics often exclude rural women from the workforce and the job market and render them invisible, even though their contribution to rural output is considerable.
6. One of the fundamental factors determining the ability of women to become self-employed through business activity is access to credit. Women still encounter serious difficulties in accessing credit and financing.

7. Childcare and family responsibilities are still considered predominantly an obligation of women, and this limits their access to paid employment. Only very limited day care or other services that facilitate childcare are available in the region, and these are usually not seen as a responsibility of society nor are there adequate regulations governing part-time work, which would enable women and men to share family responsibilities without detriment to their job benefits.
8. Various groups of women are still at a disadvantage in terms of working conditions, social security, and other services and laws offering protection. Such groups include domestic workers, rural women, and immigrants, who are often forced to accept jobs that are invisible to government and trade unions, leaving them unprotected and vulnerable.
9. In many cases the gravity and magnitude of the problem of sexual harassment in the workplace is not known and legal instruments to punish it properly do not exist.
10. New types of industries and business enterprises consistent with a global economy generally have adverse effects on the workforce, and women in particular, in terms of its ability to organize and form trade unions and, hence, to protect its rights.
11. Some countries have expressed serious concern about determining what impact subregional trade agreements such as the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI), MERCOSUR, and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) may have on the employment status of women.

OBJECTIVES

- To provide equal job opportunities and pay for both women and men in the various economic sectors.
- To promote equal treatment for working women and men, and to democratize the sharing of work and family responsibilities.

B. Strategies

Economic policies and planning

1. The CIM should promote reformulation of employment policies to incorporate the gender perspective and draw attention to a wider range of opportunities, as well as to address any negative gender implications of current patterns of work and employment. Changes in employment policies need:
 - a. To ensure that all macro and micro economic policies are subjected to a gender impact analysis and that results of such analyses are recognized and acted upon;
 - b. To attach high priority to the formulation of economic policies that have a positive impact on the employment of working women;
 - c. To broaden the range of employment opportunities for women, including support for entrepreneurial activities and nontraditional occupations, giving special attention to rural women, the disabled, and minority women;
 - d. To encourage and assist the creation of more jobs in all sectors without gender segregation, and placing appropriate and equitable value on such jobs;
 - e. To reconsider the threefold division of the life cycle, i.e., education, work, and retirement, taking into account the interrelationships among them as well as the

- domestic, parental, elder care, and family responsibilities of workers of both sexes; and
- f. To integrate fully the principle of nondiscrimination between women and men in their access to and utilization of social security.

Education and training

2. More importance should be given to the planning of human resources so that education and job training will be in keeping with job requirements in the economic system.
3. Occupational training for women also should include training and technical assistance to enable them to become self-employed, such as through programs that provide appropriate technology for rural women, programs in handicrafts, etc. It should include as well training in management techniques, in new technologies, and in other fields, to prepare them to be more successful business managers. Similarly, projects to familiarize women with labor laws should be instituted to train them to be more cognizant of their rights and better equipped to defend them.
4. The new development model of open markets calls for a skilled labor force. It is therefore necessary to use various approaches to training low-income adult women, offering enhanced training and development alternatives that allow them to participate in better-paid productive activities, and allocating more resources to formal and informal education, including literacy programs.

Legal aspects

5. It is necessary to promote legislation to recognize family responsibilities as a shared obligation for both parents. In this context, it would be especially important to enact laws to regulate part-time work for women and men, so they may take up their family responsibilities without regard to gender. It is likewise important to extend the coverage of social security benefits and other laws to the rural population and to paid domestic service workers, where applicable. Moreover, the process of adopting and acceding to international conventions that prohibit discrimination by reason of gender should be completed in the region. In both instances, it is essential to strengthen the means to monitor and enforce the law by creating clear and effective mechanisms.
6. The CIM should urge governments to take all necessary measures, including adopting legislation to prohibit gender discrimination in the workplace, particularly as regards the hiring, training, and promoting of employees, the terms and benefits of employment, sexual harassment, racial discrimination, and dismissals. Special measures must be implemented to deal with the many forms of discrimination faced by women of ethnic or racial minorities, or by disabled, indigenous, rural, and migrant women.

Special measures

7. To promote and strengthen employment agencies so that they will set up special programs to ensure equal access for women to the job market.

8. To adopt special measures to increase professional opportunities for young women, in terms of both training and fostering nontraditional jobs and careers.
9. To support the formation and strengthening of organizations of women workers and professionals and provide advice that will promote their membership in labor unions and professional organizations on an equal basis, as a means for them to effectively defend their rights as workers.
10. To increase and promote women's access to the means and factors of production. To that end, credit, housing, technical assistance, and training programs should be instituted in various sectors of the economy, and strategies and policies for the creation of jobs for women must be promoted.
11. To support low-income women through special job-creation and income-generating programs that seek to incorporate them fully into the development process and raise their standard of living.

Access to credit

12. To create and develop credit instruments specifically geared toward the needs of women, such as revolving funds to finance women's business activities, and to put in place different mechanisms to facilitate access to credit for women.

Horizontal cooperation

13. The CIM should promote horizontal technical cooperation activities through bilateral or multilateral agreements to facilitate the exchange of information about, and the replication of, experiences designed to increase women's income and generate employment for them.

Statistics, information, and analysis

14. To promote inclusion of statistical data on employment, underemployment, and unemployment by gender in national statistics systems.
15. To conduct studies and create and develop indicators to measure unpaid work done by women.

Working conditions

16. To take steps to end discrimination against women in terms of access to jobs, and to ensure equal working conditions for women and men, especially with regard to age, marital status, health, pay, and safety.
17. To establish measures to prevent women's reproductive functions from being used to justify discrimination, and to adopt effective measures to guarantee pregnant women and nursing mothers the right to maternity leave and benefits.
18. To encourage governments, employers, and trade unions, among others, to take measures to prevent and eliminate sexual harassment and racial discrimination, or any form of violence in the workplace, and to raise public awareness and adopt further legislation and enforcement measures as needed.

19. To recognize reproductive care as a responsibility of society, and to improve and increase the number of available day care facilities to enable working mothers and fathers to care for their children and the elderly.

Regional and subregional trade arrangements

20. To foster studies to determine the impact of regional and subregional trade agreements on the characteristics and status of women.

Inter-agency cooperation

21. The CIM should seek effective cooperation with the International Labor Organization (ILO) and other relevant intergovernmental agencies to develop effective strategies for organizing women in the unorganized sector, ensure compliance with international standards, and improve working conditions for women.

EDUCATION

Access to quality gender-sensitive education is essential for guaranteeing women full exercise of their social rights to enable them to adequately participate in political activities, enter and remain in the labor market under acceptable conditions, and take advantage of the opportunities afforded by development, as well as improving the quality of life and the environment.

A. Assessment

1. The opportunity to take part in formal education and to remain within the system is afforded in all the countries of the Hemisphere on an equal basis for both women and men.
2. Available statistical data indicate that in the last three decades a high number of girls have enrolled in formal primary schools. For 1990, according to information provided by the United Nations in the publication *The World's Women 1970-1990: Trends and Statistics*, the enrollment of girls has caught up with that of boys.
3. In terms of young women's access to secondary and university education, there has been a significant increase in all countries of the region, which indicates that access to primary education for girls has translated into access to higher education for women. This has increased their participation in careers considered to be nontraditional for women and also has produced a gradual change in the role of women in society.
4. Programs to extend literacy and eradicate illiteracy and functional literacy have been one of the priority aims of government social action plans in the region. Although there has been considerable success in some of the countries, illiteracy among women continues to be a serious problem in others, particularly in rural and impoverished urban areas. Access to secondary education is more restricted in rural zones than in urban areas.

5. Women have particularly benefited from nonformal education programs designed with the well-being of the general population in mind, especially distance education programs, which reach women even when they are engaged in housework.
6. The enrollment of women in vocational schools and technical and job training programs has risen, and women are making marginal gains in access to careers and jobs that are better paid.
7. Only a few countries have undertaken to review curricula, teaching practices, and educational texts to eliminate sexist stereotypes. This is an area that must receive priority attention if there is to be gender equality between women and men.
8. Sex education is still not widely taught in the region, although it has been included in curricula at the various formal education levels in a significant number of cases, and in nonformal education methodologies as well. Sex education has been imparted by the state, private agencies, and/or nongovernmental organizations.
9. Women are predominant in the teaching profession, and, in many countries, are significantly represented in mid-level administration. Their numbers are notably lower at the higher levels and in educational policy-making posts.

OBJECTIVE

To bring about changes in education, consistent with requirements for sustainable human development, in order to promote gender equity and the forging of egalitarian relations and solidarity between women and men.

B. Strategies

Curriculum development

1. To promote throughout the Hemisphere an understanding of education as an essential tool for changing attitudes, which will facilitate addressing the complex reality of the modern world, strengthening the preservation of ethical and cultural values.
2. To revise the curriculum of teacher-training programs to include gender studies as an indispensable means of eliminating sexist stereotypes and achieving gender equity.
3. To encourage a review of school curricula and teaching practices to promote equity and solidarity between women and men and tackle the specific problems of the region, proposing mechanisms for improving the quality of life.
4. To promote coeducation and equality in curricula for women and men, incorporating sex education and family life education as subjects where necessary.
5. To encourage the inclusion in the curricula for all levels of education of subjects related to the environment and the responsibility of women and men to conserve natural resources as the heritage of all generations, both present and future.

Educational policy and programs

6. To support activities that encourage states to allocate sufficient funds to the educational sector.
7. To promote the creation of fellowship programs for women in technological and scientific professions and for training and apprenticeships in appropriate and intermediary technology that are linked to the availability of employment opportunities in their fields of study.
8. To assign priority to literacy programs for rural and impoverished urban populations, including women. To that end, governments and international organizations are urged to give special attention to allocating funds for implementing policies and programs to eradicate the illiteracy and functional literacy prevailing in the region.
9. To expand the coverage and improve the quality of education for the rural population, adapting it to the needs of the people, and providing access to secondary and higher education.
10. To introduce and strengthen distance education systems and create new secondary schools and scholarship programs for women in vocational and professional career studies for women in rural and impoverished urban areas.
11. To promote the participation of women in the study of professional fields in science and technology, from which they have been largely excluded until now, and improve the educational opportunities in rural and impoverished urban areas.
12. To use educational course content to bring about sociocultural change in the perception of roles in the home and workplace and create an awareness in society that housework should not be the exclusive responsibility of women.

Education and the media

13. To design mechanisms to involve the media in education and consciousness-raising to achieve gender equality and the elimination of sexist stereotypes.
14. To conduct informal education programs through the media, aimed at comprehensive development of the individual and the family. To create an awareness that both mothers and fathers are responsible for the care and education of their children and for household tasks.
15. To recognize and eliminate the social consequences arising from stereotyping by gender and age. The media should assist by presenting positive images of women, emphasizing, in particular, the need to respect women because of their past and continuing contributions to society.
16. To undertake studies and programs to accelerate a change of attitudes in the process of socialization, in terms of definition of male and female roles and the elimination of degrading images and representations of women, in order to achieve a more egalitarian and participatory society and family unit.

Horizontal cooperation

17. To encourage, through the use of horizontal cooperation, the training of experts on gender issues to serve as multipliers responsible for promoting programs on that topic in the region, in both rural and urban areas.

HEALTH

Everyone has the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. States should take all appropriate measures to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, universal access to effective health-care services. (UN)

A. Assessment

1. Throughout the region, women live longer than men, and, in normal situations, the mortality rate of women will be lower than that of men throughout the age structure, starting from the prenatal stage and early infancy.
2. Significant strides have been made in health conditions in many countries, in both urban and rural areas, with much of the health care duties being assumed by women. Infant mortality rates have declined as a result of the eradication of childhood diseases and the widespread use of vaccines, principally because of the high priority given to maternal and child care in public health programs throughout the region. In most countries, this issue was given the highest priority during the Decade of Women. However, there is still room for improvement; for example, malnutrition remains a problem in many countries.
3. Nevertheless, the maternal death rate has not been reduced significantly, owing, among other things, to lack of adequate medical care and to the increase in high-risk pregnancies among adolescents, who often lack proper medical attention. Women's health problems have worsened in the presence of armed conflict, political violence, or migration.
4. Family planning programs, sex education, and family life education are practiced differently in each country and, generally, are not institutionalized. A couple's decisions as to the number of offspring and the preferred contraceptive method are, as a rule, respected. The right of women to control their own fertility has been recognized in Principle 4 of the Program of Action of the UN International Conference on Population and Development.
5. Despite the achievements of most of the countries in the public health field, more needs to be done, particularly in regard to health care coverage, environmental cleanup, public health, and nutrition. In many countries, the impact of structural adjustment policies, which have led to a reduction in government spending on health, has had an adverse effect on society.
6. Public health programs have been broadened to include rural areas through the creation of medical services for rural inhabitants, the establishment of satellite clinics and health centers associated with central hospitals, and the operation of mobile units, among other measures. Action by groups of volunteer nurses, paramedics, and

community leaders has been encouraged in both urban and rural areas, and here women have played an important role.

7. The majority of public health service providers and support service providers are female, and women are increasingly represented in the professional ranks; but, overall, their participation in the policy-making and decision-making spheres of this sector continues to be very sporadic and limited.
8. HIV transmission and the AIDS pandemic continue to increase globally and in the countries of the Hemisphere, and the number of women infected has risen significantly.
9. The Women, Health and Development Program of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) has made great strides in the introduction of gender considerations into analysis of the status of health in the region and into the design and implementation of comprehensive and accessible health care programs.

OBJECTIVE

To promote the comprehensive health of women by taking into account the psychobiological factors and gender conditioners that affect women throughout all stages of life.

B. Strategies

1. To promote measures to improve the quality of life of women at all stages of life, providing them effective access to quality services in the areas of education, health, housing, recreation, and work.
2. To support health care programs, giving higher priority to disease prevention, mother and child care, and the elimination of preventable diseases.
3. To ensure the incorporation of a gender perspective in the planning and delivery of public health services, and to encourage activities that promote health through the active involvement of women.
4. To promote the training of health care personnel to achieve a better understanding of women's health problems and humanized, high-quality care.
5. To establish a health information system, with gender-specific statistics and indicators, and to seek to use variables that are helpful in detecting the health problems of women, including those not related to reproductive functions.
6. To promote campaigns concerning women's reproductive health as a shared responsibility, and to encourage more awareness programs and measures to encourage couples and individuals to engage in responsible, shared, and voluntary reproduction, with special emphasis on adolescents.
7. To intensify educational programs aimed at preventing teenage pregnancy, and to bolster postnatal guidance and care directed at teenage mothers.
8. To give priority to activities designed to improve the nutrition of women, in consideration of their nutritional requirements at different stages of life and emphasizing information and education about these matters.

9. To promote more research into chronic diseases, cervical cancer, uterine cancer, and breast cancer in women for the purpose of developing early detection and timely quality care for these diseases. It is essential for governments to redouble their efforts to prevent and treat properly HIV infection, AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases at the national and regional levels.
10. To determine the nature of the mental health needs of women during different stages of life and develop prevention and care programs, with emphasis on the promotion of self-esteem and the creation of self-help and self-care groups in the health field.
11. To support the programs undertaken by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) in fields related to women, health, and development, and to seek to establish effective and supportive operational and informational links among the CIM delegates, the national institutions responsible for the advancement of women, and the PAHO national focal points.
12. To urge governments to strengthen multidisciplinary programs to combat drug trafficking and the use of narcotic and psychotropic substances, particularly prevention programs, keeping in mind the specific risks to women and families in relation to substance abuse. The CIM should work cooperatively with CICAD to address those issues that relate to women and families, by publishing research studies on the subject and urging the member countries to increase gender-specific data collection.
13. Agenda 21, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) and, in particular, Chapter 24, should be taken into account in the development of health and environmental programs.
14. The care of elderly persons, including women, should go beyond disease eradication and should address their total well-being. Strategies concerning primary health care, health services, and suitable accommodations and housing should be directed at enabling elderly women to lead fruitful lives for as long as possible, in their own homes, with their families, and in the community.
15. Statistics have shown that the life expectancy of women is greater than that of men. Governments should sponsor programs designed to alleviate isolation and poverty among elderly women by means of specialized housing, subsidized medicine, free or low-cost medical services, food, and affordable recreational and therapeutic activities.

ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE
***"...violence against women constitutes
a violation of their human rights..."***
(Convention of Belém do Pará)

A. Assessment

1. Violence against women pervades all levels of society and is basically a result of inequality in relations between men and women. Although the prevalence of this problem may appear to be recent, or more common today, this apparent "increase" in violence is basically due to the fact that women themselves began to raise the issue in public discussions, assuming their historic responsibility to confront this problem and to identify ways to resolve it.
2. In 1986, the CIM began an analysis of violence affecting women and, among other things, approved the Plan of Action in which violence against women was considered in the chapter "Areas of Special Concern," together with other topics. The social importance and significance of this problem was perceived by the CIM, which considers it one of its priority issues.
3. For that reason, the CIM convened in 1990 the Inter-American Consultation on Women and Violence, at which it thoroughly examined the topic of violence against women and the feasibility of drafting an inter-American convention on the subject. The conclusions and recommendations of the Inter-American Consultation on Women and Violence contain a wealth of information because they cover all aspects of violence, offering specific solutions in each of the areas addressed, and, moreover, were drawn from the country reports on the topic submitted by the member countries themselves. The meeting decided that an international treaty instrument on violence against women was urgently required.
4. After three years of study and consultation with the governments of the region, based on a document drafted by experts convened by the CIM, the Commission promoted and recently achieved the adoption by acclamation of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, "Convention of Belém do Pará," at the twenty-fourth regular session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States on June 9, 1994, in Belém do Pará, Brazil. The adoption of this Convention, the first international legal instrument ever adopted on women and violence, demonstrates the governments' recognition of the importance of the problem and their determination to make progress in this area.⁽²⁾
5. This effort to combat violence has been, to a greater or lesser degree, also undertaken by several countries that have enacted legislation on family violence and sexual harassment, and some have amended their constitutions, raising recognition of the rights of the family, women, and children to the level of constitutional law, and eliminating aspects of discrimination still embodied in their civil, penal, and labor laws.
6. Nonetheless, critical areas still remain to be addressed. It is therefore necessary to develop proposals for combating violence against women, and to foster mechanisms to ensure implementation of the Convention, thereby reinforcing the policies to be suggested with respect to these matters.

OBJECTIVE

To promote programs to prevent, punish, and eradicate violence against women

B. Strategies

Information, education, and dissemination

1. Strategies to be undertaken to eliminate and prevent violence against women should be developed in a holistic manner and incorporate the public and private sectors, as well as civil society, in their design, implementation, and evaluation
2. To promote, by all available means, the dissemination, signing, and ratification of the Convention of Belém do Pará, including programs to highlight the magnitude and breadth of violence against women and the need to adopt measures to combat it.

Legal reform

3. To promote and support, where appropriate, the adaptation of national legislation to the international conventions and treaties so as to ensure that women can live free from violence of any kind, both in public and in private.
4. To promote the enactment of legislation to eliminate violence wherever it occurs, whether in the workplace or in the family, to eliminate the ability of assailants to act with impunity, to accelerate the punishment process, and to establish effective measures to protect women who have been subjected to violence.

Support services

5. To promote and support the establishment of comprehensive legal services as well as other types of services that enable women to defend themselves, within the framework of respect for their human rights in all spheres (health, education, police).
6. To promote the strengthening of care resources for women subjected to violence and specialized treatment for assailants.

Statistical development and research

7. To promote statistical research to determine the nature and magnitude of violence against women, by geographic area and social group, in order to draw up plans, strategies, and work programs to prevent and eliminate it. The CIM should coordinate research to determine conditions and advances in methodology with a view to understanding and including data on these subjects within the national statistical and information services.
8. To determine the key risk factors for violence against women in general in order to comply with the preventive intent of the Convention.
9. The CIM should promote studies on the social and economic cost of gender-based violence.

Training

10. To develop plans to train and sensitize officials in the judicial, police, health, and education areas and all other personnel who, in one form or another, provide services directed toward women.

11. To support education, training, information and communications plans to change sociocultural patterns, which, by defining power relations that subordinate women to men, legitimize violence against women in the family, in society, or in the state.
12. To support mass information campaigns on the rights of women, either in domestic or in international law, and in the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, using means and language adapted to the situation of women in each OAS member country--women in urban and rural areas, indigenous women, females of various ages (especially girls and young women)--in order to raise public awareness of the gravity of violence and how it affects the family and the future of new generations.

⁽²⁾ As of November 11, 1994, fourteen countries had signed this Convention, and the Congress of one of them had voted to ratify it.

ERADICATION OF POVERTY

People are the most important and valuable resource of any nation.

Principle 2.

***(Programme of Action of the UN International Conference
on Population and Development - 1994)***

A. Assessment

1. The amendments to the OAS Charter, which included overcoming poverty as a basic development objective, as well as the "General Policy Framework and Priorities: Partnership for Development" and the Mexico "Commitment on a Partnership for Development and Struggle to Overcome Extreme Poverty," adopted at the twentieth special session of the General Assembly of the Organization, held in February 1994, constitute the foundations upon which the inter-American system seeks to build intensified cooperation in the region under a new approach that will provide more effective, partnership-based support to country efforts toward development and overcoming poverty.
2. This new basic objective of inter-American cooperation reflects recognition that the economic crisis of the past decade affected most of the countries in the Hemisphere and, in many cases, came at a high social cost, especially for women. The aforementioned Commitment [AG/DEC. 1 (XX-E/94)] states that "most member states carried out reforms and structural adjustment programs that had an impact on levels of well-being of their people and that such impact can be mitigated by means of additional and more significant partnership-based cooperation efforts." It also considers that "some countries have had to contend with additional problems resulting from the grave situations of armed violence they experienced and, consequently, the efforts to rebuild their economies call for special support from the international community."
3. It also reflects recognition that "democracy, development, and respect for all human rights are mutually reinforcing interdependent concepts, and that development and surmounting extreme poverty are a priority for the exercise of those rights;" and that "only respect for all human rights in the full exercise of democracy allows peoples, especially the most needy sectors, to freely exercise their social and economic rights and make their voices heard in the interest of progress for all."

4. An approach to overcoming poverty that stresses the creation of productive employment, as well as the importance of exchanging experience, knowledge, and technology among member states to support collectively, and in partnership, national efforts to overcome poverty is consistent with the social change that women advocate in that it calls for equity and solidarity between genders and among social groups, enabling each of the participating groups to contribute and also ensuring access to the benefits. This process requires that the effect of economic structures and factors such as foreign debts and their relevance to women be taken into account.
5. Although no exhaustive information is available, it is well known that poverty disproportionately harms women and is aggravated by the increasing number of female heads of household, who generally have the least secure and worst-paid jobs. Discrimination in the allocation of productive resources such as land and credit are additional problems, and government policies do not recognize or value the economic contributions of rural and urban women through productive and unwaged activities such as agriculture, food production, child-rearing, and domestic chores.
6. The international community in general and many individual countries are showing a growing concern for sustainable and comprehensive human development. The World Social Summit will deal with poverty as one of its main topics in March 1995 in Copenhagen. Poverty also will be an area of priority concern for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Although great importance is being attributed to the social agenda, some economic measures adopted by the governments have affected budgetary allocations to social programs, and this has had a direct impact on gender equity issues. Another circumstance that also has affected women has been the transfer to the private sector of responsibility for certain social services traditionally provided by government.
7. Owing to poverty, women are obliged to move away from home in search of opportunities to improve their lives, which, in many cases, can affect their living standards and their personal and social development.
8. It is in this context that gender equity will find fertile ground on which to address the process of egalitarian incorporation of women into society. In this connection, a gender-based perspective brings to the evaluation of living conditions and of the integration of women into development the idea that improving these areas is not sufficient unless women's role in society is analyzed--a role based not only on socioeconomic factors, but also on the functions culturally assigned to women by virtue of their gender.

OBJECTIVES

1. To promote the process of redefining labor and social policies, with social reform promoted from a gender-based perspective as an instrument for the eradication of poverty in the countries of the region, within the framework of sustainable and comprehensive human development and with a distinction made between rural and urban poverty.
2. To achieve a more equitable distribution of income and resources, and to implement practices that facilitate development of the individual as well as the community, while paying special attention to the conditions of inequity afflicting women.

B. Strategies

1. To propose that the fight against the poverty of women be considered a priority in the national development plans and policies of OAS member countries.
2. To ensure the participation of women in the formulation, implementation, and appraisal of policies, programs, and projects aimed at combating poverty.
3. To support strategic planning with a gender-based focus in the design of government policies, programs, and projects on women to guarantee equity and gauge their impact.
4. To promote the integration of a gender perspective into all economic and social policies in order to ameliorate the negative impact that structural adjustment policies have had on many countries in the region.
5. To conduct studies and statistical research to assess the impact, magnitude, and incidence of poverty, using relevant, standard indices; to develop and record relevant gender-disaggregated statistics and undertake special studies on the feminization of poverty.
6. To support the identification of projects and activities specifically designed to assist in overcoming poverty with an eye on the status of women.
7. To propose coordination with the various competent agencies of the inter-American system to ensure adequate incorporation of elements based on a gender perspective into the programs and projects they conduct to overcome poverty in the region.
8. To promote and strengthen policies that ensure women access to land, technology, information, and means of production, encouraging credit, housing, technical assistance, and training programs in the various sectors of the economy.
9. To enhance the training and education of women in all fields in order to increase their work options and so permit them to participate in better remunerated productive activities.
10. To provide support to low-income women through special employment and income-generating programs.
11. To propose that "social compensation" programs, that is, those that redistribute income and, thus, afford the poor better access to basic services, be planned and implemented with a gender perspective, giving priority to female heads of household.
12. To optimize social services that provide basic support by expanding daycare systems for children and the elderly in order to facilitate greater participation by women in the labor force, the participation of men, and the democratization of roles within the family.
13. To propose that all plans designed to overcome poverty take account of conserving the environment and natural resources.

14. To ensure that all programs aimed at eradicating poverty are sensitive to the language, culture, race, and gender of those persons for whom the service is provided.

**NATIONAL MACHINERY RESPONSIBLE FOR
THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN** ⁽³⁾

A. Assessment

1. Since 1950, the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) has been recommending that member state governments establish or strengthen women's bureaus as national support mechanisms for the advancement of women. The strategies to carry out the CIM Regional Plan of Action during the Decade of Women repeatedly have indicated the importance of the role of women's bureaus or similar organizations. CARICOM, the IDB, UNIFEM, and UNICEF have recognized the importance of these institutions in furthering the advancement of women.
2. The United Nations Forward-Looking Strategies also have pointed to the important role that national machinery for the advancement of women should play in the development process of their countries.
3. The region shows a marked trend toward recognition of the importance of these institutions, and many have been relocated at the highest level in the government structure, which, in turn, has enhanced their ability to affect government policy. In some countries, the person directly responsible for the daily operations of the national machinery holds the rank of minister; in other cases, there has been a movement toward the establishment of these institutions by law and, in some cases, as semiautonomous governmental institutions.
4. The national machineries for the advancement of women continue to share, throughout the region, certain characteristics: most are under-resourced, in terms of both human and financial resources, with respect to the activities assigned to them. To the extent that these institutions have been created as responses to national demands, their effectiveness is an indicator of good governance.
5. Some countries of the region have implemented various programs dealing with women, children, and the family that, in one way or another, are favorable to women despite institutional weakness, duplication of efforts, and a lack of effective coordination mechanisms.
6. During the Decade of Women, the CIM sponsored two expert meetings to discuss the women's bureaus, assess their ability and potential to promote changes in the status of women, and recommend strategies for the future. The first of these meetings was held in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia (September 6-10, 1982), and the second in San José, Costa Rica (November 25-29, 1985). Both meetings set up a framework for the activities of the CIM in relation to these institutions, which identifies them as central to the policy planning activities of a nation and as natural counterparts for many of the CIM-supported programs and projects.

7. Over the last decade, a variety of governmental institutions has been created in the member states with the specific objective of including gender perspective in government policies in the various sectors.

OBJECTIVE

To create or strengthen national machineries for the advancement of women and provide them sufficient resources and authority at the highest level of government to ensure that a gender perspective is applied in the formulation of policies and programs, data collection, research, and evaluation

B. Strategies

1. To ensure that the national machineries responsible for the advancement of women have sufficient resources and authority to ensure that all development policies and programs include women, recognize their contribution to development and enable them to participate equally in its benefits. The basic functions of these national machineries should be preparing studies on the status of women, formulation of policies, coordination, follow-up, and evaluation of those policies.
2. To establish and/or strengthen program and operational linkages with national institutions, the OAS National Liaison Agencies (ONEs), official national agencies responsible for bilateral and multilateral assistance, and those responsible for national planning in order to facilitate a coordinated approach to planning and ensure the inclusion of a gender focus in national development plans.
3. The national machinery responsible for the advancement of women should conduct an intersectoral study with the cooperation of the various ministries and sectors and civil society in order to devise a comprehensive approach to its activities.
4. To ensure that the national machinery has the responsibility to coordinate and supervise the various governmental activities dealing with gender issues, to enhance the activities that are required of the governmental agencies dealing with women's issues.
5. The national machinery should maintain close coordination with the various technical cooperation agencies and financing agencies that support development projects in its country in order to promote the inclusion of a gender focus.
6. The national machinery should establish close collaborative working relationships with the focal points for gender issues that are established in specific ministries as a result of recommendations from other regional and international organizations. The focal points that deal with the issues of women, health, and development and that liaise with PAHO are an example.
7. The national machinery responsible for the advancement of women should establish close working relations with the national statistics offices in order to promote the production of uniform and accurate statistical data, disaggregated by gender, to accurately reflect the status of women and to support the formulation of national policies. This information should be provided to the CIM Permanent Secretariat and other regional and international organizations for their information and analysis.

8. The national machinery should compile information on agencies that finance projects for women, or that affect women, in order to keep abreast of the various alternatives available to countries.
9. The CIM principal delegate should establish close coordination and cooperation with the national machinery responsible for the advancement of women in order to support execution of those policies, and report periodically to the CIM Permanent Secretariat on the progress made.
10. The CIM should support the expansion, consolidation and operation of the network of national machinery responsible for the advancement of women in OAS member countries and the establishment of collaborative linkages among the national machineries.

⁽³⁾ These institutions, commonly known as national machinery for the advancement of women, are the governmental institutions created to promote the advancement of women.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

Cooperation plans and programs must be linked to overall national development objectives and priorities, and should focus equally on women and men. Cooperation plans and programs should incorporate the gender perspective. Women should be full and equal participants in cooperation projects and activities. The needs of underprivileged groups of women should receive special attention in cooperation programs.

A. Assessment

1. The Decade of Women showed an increase in the exchange of information and cooperation among organizations in relation to women's activities, and most regional bodies designated focal points for women's activities. However, in many cases, insufficient resource allocations to those activities limited their long-term effectiveness. Moreover, in many instances, activities to promote the integration of women in development were confined to these focal points, and have not been incorporated in planning and in programs.
2. During and since the Decade of Women, the General Assembly of the Organization of American States has included full and equal participation of women by the year 2000 as a specific item on its agenda, and has received biennial reports concerning the activities undertaken by the organs and agencies of the inter-American system. The CIM has been called to provide the conceptual framework to facilitate the evaluation of programs designed to achieve such full and equal participation. To this end, the CIM has signed cooperation agreements with the following inter-American specialized organizations: the Inter-American Indian Institute-III-(1981), the Pan American Health Organization-PAHO-(1982), the Inter-American Children's Institute-IIN-(1982), and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture-IICA-(1979); the CIM also signed a Supplementary Technical Cooperation Agreement with the General Secretariat of the OAS (1984).
3. The amendments to the Charter of the Organization, which included elimination of extreme poverty as a basic objective of integral development and led to the creation of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI), as well as

to the General Policy Framework and Priorities: Partnership for Development and the Mexico Commitment on a Partnership for Development and Struggle to Overcome Extreme Poverty, adopted at the twentieth special session of the General Assembly of the Organization on cooperation for development, held in February 1994, constitute the basis for intensified cooperation within the inter-American system, with a new focus, so as to support national development efforts.

4. Within this conceptual and operating framework, the CIM has a dual task: on the one hand, to identify projects and activities specifically designed to help overcome the problems affecting women, with particular emphasis on the issue of poverty, while responding to the needs of women, and, on the other hand, to coordinate with the various competent organizations of the inter-American system to ensure adequate inclusion of a gender perspective in programs and projects carried out to overcome poverty in the region.

OBJECTIVE:

To ensure that mechanisms of cooperation for development effectively and efficiently contribute to achieving full participation by women in all aspects of the development process, paying special attention to overcoming poverty.

B. Strategies

1. Regional cooperation strategies must be formulated on the premise that sustainable development requires the full participation of women as both agents and beneficiaries of that process. All inter-American development agencies should incorporate gender considerations in their policies and put in place the monitoring and evaluation systems necessary to ensure their effective implementation.
2. Once the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI) is established, the CIM should establish an effective advisory and cooperative relationship with the Council and seek to ensure that all projects submitted to the Council for consideration contain a clearly identified gender perspective. This advisory assistance includes training planners and specialists of inter-American development agencies in gender issues and in planning with a gender perspective.
3. The CIM should inform delegates on new forms of cooperation, access to the various methods of cooperation, and the principal priorities and policies of the OAS.
4. The CIM should promote inter- and intra-institutional coordination to further the advancement of women and their integration into the development process, particularly in relation to the exchange of information and the establishment of collaborative arrangements to undertake joint activities, the strengthening of regional and subregional information systems on women, the creation of databases and information systems on women, and collaboration with agencies specializing in gender issues, thereby developing opportunities to share information and research data at the national level and among agencies.
5. The CIM periodically should study reports on the progress made and concrete measures implemented at the national, regional, and inter-American levels to advance the status of women in relation to the goals and strategies formulated.

MIGRATION AND WOMEN IN AREAS OF CONFLICT
***Migrant, refugee, and displaced women constitute highly
vulnerable groups with specific needs that
require special mechanisms to satisfy them.***

A. Assessment

1. Women are involved in two types of migration, internal and international, the many causes of which often include international economic inequities, poverty, and environmental degradation, in addition to a lack of peace and security, human rights violations, and the underdevelopment of democratic and judicial institutions.
2. Migration can take place from the countryside to the city, or from one geographic area to another, primarily to marginalized urban sectors. In many cases this type of migration involves a search for work or better employment opportunities and the expectation of a more prosperous life and access to schooling, housing, and health care. But in some countries of the region armed conflicts are what have led the population, especially women, to leave in search of safety and protection for their fundamental rights. In war-torn areas, girls and elderly women are more notably at risk because of their vulnerability to violence.
3. Some of the damaging effects of in-country migration are poverty, violence--including sexual assault--and overcrowding in the cities, which in turn leads to higher crime rates; these conditions severely burden the country's social structure.
4. International migration mainly grows out of the same roots as internal migration. This problem is made even more complex by each country's regulations on the legal status of female migrants, whether migrant workers, refugees, or asylum-seekers. Moreover, despite recognition of the universality of human rights, acts of ethnic, racial, religious, and gender discrimination still persist, along with xenophobia and intolerance, threatening the dignity, coexistence, and respect that should exist among persons, groups, and nations; racism and discrimination in their various forms are offenses against human rights and the principles and practices of democracy as a way of life and form of government.
5. The effects of international migration include family disintegration; loss of valuable human resources, including skilled workers, which negatively affects the development of the country of origin; the potential use of women in drug trafficking and prostitution; all of which negatively affects both the country of origin and the destination country.
6. The magnitude and complexity of problems faced today by migrant women--be they displaced persons, refugees, asylum-seekers, or migrant workers--and their families, as well as the enormous difficulties involved in helping and protecting them, are still cause for profound concern.

OBJECTIVE

To promote respect for all the human rights of migrant women, studying and combating the causes of migration and encouraging sustainable development in the countries of the region so as to raise living standards in the countryside and cities.

B. Strategies

1. To expand efforts to find solutions and reduce conflicts through dialogue and political negotiation, so as to guarantee individuals their right to live in peace and democracy in a framework of respect for law and human rights.
2. To analyze and combat the causes of migration, especially those linked to poverty, by promoting measures aimed at economic self-sufficiency for women, including access to jobs, appropriate working conditions, and control over economic resources, the environment, land, capital, and technology.
3. To ensure that countries having to take in displaced persons or refugees have financial and technical assistance at the appropriate level so as to provide them with the care they require.
4. To integrate the population of displaced women into development programs, and to create incentives for them to return to their places of origin.
5. To promote continuing education programs for rural women and poor urban women so they have the skills to avoid migration and overcrowding in the cities.
6. To promote also access to basic food, housing, and health services, taking the special circumstances of migrant women into account; to include rural and poor urban women in social security systems and other social welfare programs.
7. To train migrant women and sensitize them through self-esteem and gender awareness programs.
8. To allocate additional financial resources to care for women in special situations owing to age, living conditions, or membership in minority and indigenous groups, while recognizing and respecting their cultural traditions.
9. To promote an integrated approach to economic and social policies that would serve as a tool for keeping certain groups of women in special situations from being marginalized and, at the same time, would contribute to the advancement and fair social treatment of women.
10. To promote programs to prevent and discourage drug use, drug trafficking, and prostitution.
11. To provide adequate care to women living in temporary shelters because of disasters or political problems.
12. To urge member states to guarantee protection of all of the human rights of female migrant workers and their families, refugee women, displaced women, or women seeking asylum, as well as of minority populations and women who are victims of ethnic, racial, job, or gender discrimination, in accordance with the corresponding international instruments and generally accepted principles of international law, and to urge them to create conditions promoting greater harmony between them and the rest of society.