



INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN

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MESSAGE FROM HER EXCELLENCY, MRS. LAURA ALBORNOZ POLLMANN, PRESIDENT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN (CIM) OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES ON THE OCCASION OF THE COMMEMORATION OF DAY OF THE WOMEN OF THE AMERICAS

Today, February 18, we are celebrating the Day of the Women of the Americas and yet another anniversary of the establishment of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM).

A few months ago I assumed the Presidency of the CIM with a firm commitment to address, in a broader context and more vigorously than ever before, the grave injustices that are generally women's lot in life throughout the Hemisphere. The time has come for our countries to redress all inequities, which, rooted in groundless prejudices, have prevented women from fully exercising their rights, among them political participation and access to decision-making.

Our aim during the 2008-2010 term is to increase the potential the CIM affords to our governments in its role as the principal forum for generating hemispheric policy. Our task is to strengthen the CIM as a body for the operational coordination of measures taken to bring an end to existing inequities, both at the local level and within the inter-American system on such priority issues as women and justice, decent jobs, health, education, and culture.

Given present-day realities, we are faced with new challenges that call for joint efforts if we are to respond to such serious topics as violence against women, the feminization of poverty, trafficking in and the smuggling of persons, especially women and girls, the impact of natural disasters, the feminization of HIV/AIDS, and unequal pay to women and men for the same work, among other issues that it has not yet been possible to include on the agendas of our states on a permanent basis.

We are prepared and have the capacity to meet the international commitments we have assumed to benefit the women of the Americas. We must continue working for social cohesion and social welfare policies, the strengthening of democracy and the rule of law, the consolidation of genuine peace, and the alleviation of economic and social factors that hinder environmental sustainability and heighten the vulnerability of people, especially women, female adolescents, and girls.

Economic crises affect women more than men. There is therefore an urgent need to expand job and entrepreneurial opportunities for women to ensure that they have the necessary support to avoid setbacks during the current economic crisis and to develop human capital for the future, thus preparing them to meet new challenges. I say this with the conviction that, when women have access to resources and opportunities, their families, communities, and the new generations also stand to gain.

For all these reasons, I would like to take this opportunity to invite women and men, on this day that is a milestone in the defense of women's rights, to reaffirm, with all their energy and with hopes for a just and equal future enabling democracies throughout the region to prosper, our commitment to achieve results that reflect a major difference along the historic path traveled by the CIM. I am convinced that by joining forces we will be able to do so. Heartfelt congratulations to all of you.