



ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN

FOLLOW-UP MECHANISM
CONVENTION OF BELÉM DO PARÁ (MESECVI)
COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON VIOLENCE (CEVI)
18-19 July, 2007
Buenos Aires, Argentina

OEA/Ser.L/II.7.10
MESECVI/CEVI/doc.83/07
20 July 2007
Original: Spanish

MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS OF THE
MECHANISM TO FOLLOW UP ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION ON THE PREVENTION, PUNISHMENT
AND ERADICATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN,
CONVENTION OF *BELÉM DO PARÁ*

FINAL MINUTES

The inaugural session was held at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, July 18, at the Salón Libertador in the Argentine Foreign Ministry's Palacio San Martín, in Buenos Aires, the Argentine Republic. Participating in the event were representatives of the diplomatic corps, officials of the national and provincial governments, international organizations, experts of the Mechanism to Follow Up on the Implementation of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, Convention of *Belém do Pará* (MESECVI), civil society organizations and other special guests. The session began when the Principal Specialist of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) and Coordinator of the Technical Secretariat of the MESECVI read a message from the President of CIM, Jacqui Quinn-Leandro. She was followed by the Argentine Foreign Ministry's Special Representative for Women's Issues and Principal Delegate to the CIM, Ambassador Magdalena Faillace. The next to take the floor was the Ambassador of Mexico to the Government of Argentina, Her Excellency María Cristina de la Garza, who spoke on behalf of the Office of the Chair of the Conference of States Parties of the MESECVI. The next to address the inaugural session was the Secretary General of the OAS, José Miguel Insulza, followed by Argentina's Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship, Jorge Taiana. The addresses are published as documents MESECVI/CE/INF. 4/07, MESECVI/CEVI/INF. 5/07, MESECVI/CEVI/INF. 6/07, MESECVI/CEVI/INF. 7/07 and MESECVI/CEVI/INF. 8/07 respectively.

Following a recess, the working sessions got underway that afternoon, with Ambassador Magdalena Faillace participating. The Coordinator of the Committee of Experts, Leíla Linhares Barsted, thanked the Argentine Government for having sponsored the meeting and for enabling nongovernmental organizations to participate, thus setting the stage for more direct interaction between these organizations and the experts. She underscored the enormous effort that

nongovernmental organizations had made to be present at the meeting. She then gave a recap of the entire process, starting with the commencement of the multilateral evaluation round; she also described the efforts being made from the OAS to promote the Convention and its implementation. Responding to a concern that some experts had expressed over the fact that the Coordinator was not on the dais during the inaugural session, she explained that while she would have been honored to have had the opportunity to address that session, she was unable to do so for reasons of protocol.

The Technical Secretariat reported on the activities carried out since CEVI's last meeting, highlighting the follow-up to the agreements concluded there, the efforts made to have all the Caribbean governments participating in the MESECVI, the meeting held with an advisor to the OAS Secretary General to inform her of the Mechanism's requirements and the preparations for the forthcoming Conference of States Parties. Reference was also made to the publication of an informative brochure about the MESECVI and to the report on the Mechanism presented to the OAS General Assembly. Lastly, the Technical Secretariat reported on the recommendation that the CIM Assembly of Delegates had made to the CEVI, which was that, if deemed advisable, the Committee should include an indicator on femicide or femicidal violence in the questionnaire for the next multilateral evaluation round.

The Alternate Coordinator, Susana Chiarotti, announced that a special period had been set aside precisely to hear from the representatives of the nongovernmental organizations of Argentina and of other countries in the region whom the Argentine Government, in consultation with CEVI, had invited to participate in the meeting. She explained that because so many participants had signed up to address those present, the foreign organizations would be heard first, followed by the domestic organizations. The Alternate Coordinator said that allocating this portion of the meeting's time in this way was done in compliance with the Rules of Procedure and Statute of the Mechanism and in furtherance of decisions taken by CEVI at previous meetings; but it was also the first time that civil society organizations would be directly involved in the meeting's proceedings, thus lending greater credibility and substance to the process, which is always in need of more information.

El Salvador's representative to the Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights (CLADEM) spoke of the laws adopted in that country, the need to educate public officials in gender-related issues, and the need to create a women's commission in the Legislative Assembly and for a policy on women's affairs. The representative pointed to the fact that the budget of the women's mechanism in her country is very small and that the issue of access to information is not being discussed, and is confused with freedom of expression.

The representatives of Peru, members of the Manuela Ramos Movement and CLADEM-Peru, shared the time slot assigned for their presentation. They emphasized the gap between the achievements on paper (formal accomplishments) and tangible progress. The two also underscored the need for legislation on violence against women, and not just intrafamily violence, the need to increase the budget for the issue of violence and for legislation on the rights to sexual and reproductive health.

Next to take the floor were the following Argentine organizations: the *Comisión de Equidad de Género del Consejo Consultor de Sociedad Civil* [the Gender Equity Commission of the Civil Society Advisory Council]; CLADEM Argentina; the *Fundación Mujeres en Igualdad* [the Women in Equality Foundation]; *Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer* [Foundation for Studies and Research on Women] (FEIM); *Red de Monitoreo de la Provincia de*

Buenos Aires [Surveillance System of the Province of Buenos Aires]; *Red Metropolitana de la Violencia de la Provincia de Buenos Aires* [Buenos Aires Province Violence Surveillance System]; *Red Metropolitana Norte de Monitoreo* [Northern Metropolitan Surveillance System]; *Asociación Civil de Derechos Humanos: Mujeres Unidas Migrantes y Refugiadas* [Civil Human Rights Association: Migrant and Refugee Women United] (AMUMRA), Rachel Holloway of Amnesty International and the GTZ. These speakers touched on the areas identified by the questionnaire sent to the governments and on the violence-related laws enacted in Argentina. They also talked about issues like the dramatic cuts made to the budget for the National Women's Council, the fact that government officials do not have the proper training, the difficulty women have in availing themselves of the courts, the need to have gender-disaggregated statistics, the impact of HIV/AIDS on women, and trafficking in persons.

The experts and the representatives of nongovernmental organizations engaged in a dialogue that highlighted the need to promote national policies that constitute a comprehensive approach to violence against women, and not just intrafamily or domestic violence. The experts expressed an interest in working in coordination with the nongovernmental organizations, so as to get input from alternative sources that would make the preliminary reports prepared more thorough. The experts were also of the view that more should be done to engage the competent national authorities. When the time set aside for the dialogue between the experts and the nongovernmental organizations was finished, Ambassador Faillace, the Coordinator and Alternate Coordinator all expressed their gratitude for the important contributions those organizations had made to the meeting's deliberations.

Following a brief recess, and in keeping with the procedure adopted at CEVI's second meeting, the experts divided up to meet in three previously agreed upon regional subgroups, to evaluate the preliminary reports. Once the subgroups completed their evaluations, a plenary session was held at which a rapporteur from each of the three subgroups presented a report on the findings arrived at during the sessions held, describing how the subgroup went about its work and the conclusions it reached. One such conclusion was that the experts should do a final review of the preliminary reports before they are sent to the governments. Emphasis was placed on the fact that because the Committee's collective responsibility and credibility rely on all its members, no report should be approved without being checked for the quality of its content and the adequacy of its length. August 15 was set as the deadline for sending the final country reports to the Technical Secretariat, including the changes or modifications agreed upon in the subgroups and in the plenary. If an expert fails to meet the established deadline, the latest version received at the Secretariat will be used so as to be fair to the governments that answered the questionnaires. The rapporteur's reports are published as separate documents MESECVI/CEVI/doc.80/07, MESECVI/CEVI/doc.81/07 and MESECVI/CEVI/doc.82/07, respectively.

CEVI agreed that the name and signature of the expert ought not to appear at the end of the respective country report. This is one way to ensure that the opinions expressed therein are entirely independent. It was also because in the final analysis the reports are approved by the plenary, which includes all its members. It was therefore decided to include a paragraph at the beginning of each report stating that the report was approved by the Committee and that, in keeping with Article 20 of CEVI's Rules of Procedure, the expert from the country concerned did not take part in the evaluation of his or her country's report.

It was agreed that for purposes of future rounds, the experts would collaborate with each other on preparation of the preliminary report: one expert would write the report and the other would review it. The reports could thus be dispatched more expeditiously, with fewer formalities. CEVI would not accept reports unless prepared according to this procedure. Taking the *rapporteur's* reports into account and because some of the preliminary reports already presented needed to be polished and some experts were not present, as an exception the Committee agreed to the offer made by the expert from Jamaica to do a review of the report on Saint Lucia; the expert from Mexico, to review the report on Venezuela, and the expert from Venezuela to review the report on Bolivia. Mindful of the fact that not all the reports were approved in the working subgroups, the plenary decided that every State that answered the questionnaire should have its country report at the Conference of States Parties. This way, an expert's failure to comply would not prevent the country report from going to the Conference of States Parties. The Secretariat was also asked to urge the governments to appoint alternate delegates and to move quickly to designate the competent national authorities in the event of changes.

The consultant from CIM, Flor de María Valdez, introduced the draft Hemispheric Report. She explained the method used to prepare the report and summarized its contents. The participants congratulated her for the work accomplished and then made their observations regarding both the content and form of the report. Emphasis was placed on the need to standardize terminology and use inclusive language, and to change some tables. With regard to the first part, which is about the questionnaire, the decision was to take out the strengths and recommendations related to the questionnaire and make them a separate document, which would then be used as a reference. It was suggested that in future, the questionnaires should feature fewer but more concrete questions. It was also decided that the recommendations in the hemispheric report should be updated to reflect the comments from each working subgroup and any additional input from the revised final reports.

The Secretariat took note of all the comments and the plenary approved the Hemispheric Report subject to the final electronic review that the experts will do of the report once the comments and the results of each country's final report are included in order to ensure that all input is reflected. Accordingly, the plenary agreed that the Secretariat should finalize the Hemispheric Report by September 7, highlighting the changes made in such a way that they can be easily and quickly identified by the experts and thereby expedite the review process. It was also agreed that if comments were not received by September 17, that silence would be understood to mean assent.

Views were exchanged in discussing how best to follow up the recommendations contained in the country reports. It was suggested that regional seminars should be held to publicize the Mechanism and circulate the Hemispheric Report. It was recommended that the experts should be involved in these seminars, in order to explain how the MESECVI functions. Governments should participate by way of the national women's mechanisms and the Foreign Ministry, as should OAS agencies in the member states. Another proposal suggested that activities be planned for dissemination of the MESECVI in each country, under the coordination of the national expert, the competent national authorities and the OAS.

The plenary agreed that the best way to follow up on the reports' recommendations would be to put together a system of indicators. The Coordinator was therefore asked to team up with the Secretariat to identify resources and to begin, as soon as possible, the process of contracting a consultant with recognized experience in the subject, to assemble those indicators taking the reports' recommendations into account. Similarly, to press forward with the process involved in the next

multilateral evaluation round, the Secretariat was asked to use the recommendations and contributions made by the experts to begin putting together the next questionnaire, in order to have it ready for discussion at CEVI's next meeting.

Since two years had passed since the Coordinator's appointment, under the CEVI Rules of Procedure the time had come to elect the new officers. The Coordinator for the 2005-2007 period, Leila Barsted, stated that owing to her professional commitments, she would not be able to serve as Coordinator and thanked the experts for the support she had received during her term in office. When the vote was taken, Susana Chiarotti of Argentina and Hilda Morales of Guatemala were elected Coordinator and Alternate Coordinator, respectively. Both requested the floor to express their appreciation and their commitment to the work that the Committee is doing.

Summarizing, in keeping with the recommendations from the working groups and the meeting's agenda, consensus was reached on the following decisions:

1. Preliminary/final country reports:

- a. To do a final review of the country reports before the final reports are sent to the governments;
- b. To set August 15 as the deadline for the experts to send the final country reports to the Technical Secretariat, which are to include the changes or modifications agreed upon in the subgroups and in the plenary. If the expert fails to meet that deadline, the latest version received at the Secretariat will be taken as the final report, to avoid disadvantage to the governments that answered the questionnaires;
- c. To agree that neither the name nor signature of the responsible expert will appear in the preliminary or final country reports so as to ensure that their opinions are entirely independent and because in the final analysis, the reports are approved by the plenary, which includes all its members;
- d. To include a paragraph at the beginning of each country report stating that it was approved by the Committee and that, in keeping with Article 20 of CEVI's Rules of Procedure, the expert of the respective country did not take part in the report's evaluation and approval, and
- e. To accept the offers made by the experts of Jamaica, Mexico and Venezuela, to collaborate with the review of the reports on Saint Lucia, Venezuela and Bolivia, respectively.

2. Procedure:

- a. For purposes of future rounds, to agree that preliminary reports will be prepared on the basis of a mutual support system whereby one expert will be responsible for preparing the report and another for reviewing it, this for the sake of a swifter and more informal process, and

- b. To plan activities for publicizing the MESECVI in each country, under the coordination of the national expert, the competent national authorities and the OAS.

3. Hemispheric Report

- a. To approve the Hemispheric Report subject to the review that the experts will do of the electronic version once the comments received during the meeting and those resulting from each country's final report have been included to ensure that all contributions are reflected;
- b. To send the revised Hemispheric Report to the experts by September 7, highlighting the changes introduced to make them easy to identify and thereby expedite the review process, and
- c. To agree that if no comments are received from the experts by September 17, their silence shall be interpreted as assent.

4. Follow up

- a. To organize a system of indicators by which to follow up on the recommendations made in the reports; to that end, the Coordinator and the Secretariat will identify resources and begin the process of hiring a consultant with recognized experience in the topic to assemble the indicators bearing in mind the recommendations contained in the reports, and
- b. To forge ahead with preparations for the next multilateral evaluation round, to which end the Secretariat will use the recommendations and input contributed by the experts to begin preparing the next questionnaire, so that it can be discussed at CEVI's next meeting.

At the end of the event, a panel was held coordinated by Ambassador Magdalena Faillace, in order to report on the activities that various government agencies have conducted on the issue of violence against women. Nongovernmental organizations also participated in the panel. The panelists were: Dr. María José Lubertino, President of the National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI), Ministry of Justice and Human Rights; Dr. Eva Giberti, Coordinator of the Victims against Violence Program, Ministry of the Interior; Dr. Eugenio Freixas, Director General of the Office of Assistance to Victims of Crime, Office of the Attorney General of the Nation; Dr. Ana González, Director of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Collective Impact, Secretariat of Human Rights of the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights; Lic. Olga Hammar, Chair of the Tripartite Commission for Equal Treatment and Equal Opportunity for Men and Women in the Job Market, Ministry of Labor and Social Security; and Lic. María Lucila Colombo, Chair of the National Women's Council, Social Policy Steering Board, Ministry of Social Development.

Ambassador Magdalena Faillace addressed the closing session, calling particular attention to the support received from Argentina's Foreign Ministry. The outgoing Coordinator, Leila Barsted, the new Coordinator, Susana Chiarotti, and the Alternate Coordinator, Hilda Morales, thanked the Government of Argentina for having hosted the event and for the courtesies extended. They also thanked the participants and panelists for their contributions, and congratulated the Technical Secretariat for its outstanding performance.