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NATIONAL REPORT: C A N A D A

(Item 3.b on the Agenda)

This report provides an overview of Canadian initiatives undertaken to promote the status of women since the 2002 Assembly of Delegates of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) of the Organization of American States.

We note that the majority of the content for this report has been extracted from “Canada’s June 2004 National Response to the UN Questionnaire to Governments on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly”.

I. General Aspects

Canada is composed of ten provinces and three territories. Under Canada’s constitutional division of powers, jurisdiction over some areas affecting women’s lives is the responsibility of both the federal and provincial-territorial levels of government, e.g., justice services. In other cases, some aspects of an issue are solely under provincial-territorial jurisdiction, such as education, while others are strictly a federal government responsibility, such as criminal law. Thus, efforts to advance the status of women in Canada require commitment and partnership at all levels of government, and by women’s and other equality-seeking organizations across the country.

Status of Women Canada (SWC) is the federal government agency responsible for providing strategic advice to support the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women in fulfilling her/his role in Cabinet and for coordinating and providing leadership and expertise in working with other federal government departments and agencies on issues affecting gender equality. SWC supports government-wide mainstreaming of gender equality perspectives in all policy areas, works to ensure the diversity of women’s realities are reflected in Federal policies and programs, undertakes its own policy analysis and development, and funds equality seeking non-governmental organizations and independent policy research. SWC continues to emphasize the critical importance of three priority areas for women: improving women’s economic autonomy and well-being, eliminating systemic violence against women and children, and advancing women’s human rights.

The Canadian government is committed to building a society, which is inclusive and respectful of all Canadians. International agreements including the CIM Plan of Action and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action have been an important catalyst for progress towards equality. Canada’s *Federal Plan for Gender Equality*, adopted in 1995, as a contribution toward the goals of global equality, includes a government-wide gender based analysis policy and over 300 commitments by a wide range of departments and agencies. In 2000, the Government of Canada, building upon the foundation of actions taken under the *Federal Plan for Gender Equality (1995-2000)*, approved the *Agenda for Gender Equality (AGE)* as a government-wide initiative to advance women’s equality.

The components of the AGE initiative include: engendering current and new policy and program initiatives; accelerating implementation of gender-based analysis commitments; enhancing voluntary sector capacity; engaging Canadians in the policy process in a sustained, structured manner; and meeting Canada’s international commitments and treaty obligations.

The *Agenda for Gender Equality* is lead by Status of Women Canada, in cooperation with other federal departments, including Justice Canada, Social Development Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, and Health Canada. This interdepartmental framework for AGE

highlights the importance of working horizontally across federal departments and in collaboration with various partners from both the public and private sectors to address gender issues and current gaps in public policy and programming.

II. Judicial, Political, & Socioeconomic Situation

Canada has a clear legal foundation for gender equality in its *Charter of Rights and Freedom's*. In addition, the federal and all provincial and territorial governments have adopted human rights legislation that prohibits discrimination based on characteristics such as race, nationality and ethnic background, colour, sex and disability.

The Canadian policy development process related to equality between women and men, has also been influenced by the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW). In particular, the importance of the Convention for Canadian civil society has become more evident since Canada's 2003 presentation of its Fifth Report to the CEDAW Committee. This is attributable, in part, to the active engagement of women's and equality-seeking non-governmental organizations (NGO's). The CEDAW process is having a greater impact in discussions about future initiatives, particularly with respect to poverty among women, the situation of Aboriginal (Indigenous) women and issues of government machinery and accountability mechanisms for gender equality.

Furthermore, in 2002, Canada acceded to the CEDAW Optional Protocol and ratified the *Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* and the *Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air*. Canada was also a strong advocate for the inclusion of sexual and gender-based crimes in the *Rome Statute* of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which Canada ratified in July 2000. Canada continues to actively support efforts to ratify and implement the *Rome Statute* through Foreign Affairs Canada's ICC and Accountability Campaign.

The Convention of Belém do Pará

While Canada is not a signatory to the *Convention of Belém do Pará*, we have remained engaged in the discussions on the proposed follow-up process in order to collaborate with Principal Delegates and Member States to ensure that the follow-up process will be sustainable, effective and efficient.

In addition to its active engagement in ongoing discussions on the most appropriate way to follow-up on the *Convention of Belém do Pará*, Canada has focused on the 1979 U.N. *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol to which Canada acceded on October 18, 2002. The Optional Protocol enables individual women or groups of women to bring complaints to a UN Committee (composed of 23 experts), once all national remedies have been exhausted. The Optional Protocol also enables the Committee to conduct inquiries into "grave or systematic violations" of women's rights.

Canada remains committed to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and Beijing+5 outcome documents, as well as the UN *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women*. Canada also works actively at the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), the UN General Assembly (GA) and the UN Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) to support resolutions and participate in negotiations on agreements calling for the elimination of violence against women. As it has done since 1994, Canada continues to lead on the resolution to eliminate violence against

women at the UNHCR. This resolution established the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women.

General Socioeconomic Context of Women in Canada

Trends in the population show that women's overall situation reflects continuing improvement in many areas such as income and education and some challenges in others, such as the wage gap and the unequal distribution of unpaid work. For example, while women's earnings and incomes are steadily improving relative to men's, there are still significant gaps. A gender equality index for after tax (disposable) income shows increases in women's income from 59% of men's in 1991 to 63% in 2001. This reflects some of the impact of transfers from government programs that support children as they are growing up and adults during periods of unemployment, illness, disability, maternity and dependant care demands. It also reflects the gender equality effects of progressive taxation and, most significantly, increases in women's paid work. The low-income rate among women in Canada has markedly decreased in recent years, from 14.8% in 1996 to 10.1% in 2002.

Inside the aggregate information, however, there are patterns of particular difficulties for some groups of women, such as lone-parents, senior women living alone and Aboriginal women. They indicate particular gaps or challenges for some women concerning issues such as health, education, and employment. Factors such as age, race, ethnicity, immigrant status and Aboriginal heritage have significant effects on women's economic status. For example, in 2000, 38% of Aboriginal women and 27 % of immigrant women were in low-income situations. In 2000, 35.1% of lone mothers were in low-income situations. Aboriginal lone parents face even higher rates, a particular concern, as Aboriginal birth rates are higher and the population younger than among the non-Aboriginal population.

An assessment of these trends and patterns has been, and will continue to be important in identifying gaps and areas for future work on gender equality, with greater attention to diversity among women and those who face the greatest challenges.

III. Monitoring the Implementation of the CIM Strategic Plan of Action

(i) The Eradication of Poverty

Poverty reduction efforts are viewed as part of, not separate from, efforts to improve the economic well-being of women generally. Economic autonomy enables women to provide for themselves and their families, reducing the risk of poverty. Recognizing the strong links between children's and women economic well-being and the importance of early childhood development, providing support for families with children, especially low-income families, has been a priority.

Parental Leave and Benefits - In 2000, the Government of Canada amended the *Employment Insurance Act* (EI) to extend parental benefits from 10 weeks to 35 weeks, resulting in a combined maternity/parental benefit period of one year. In addition, to improved flexibility, the second two-week waiting period, normally served by fathers claiming parental benefits, was dropped. Parents are also now allowed to work while receiving benefits, a change expected to help mothers make a gradual return to the workplace, if they so choose. Initial results showed that there was a substantial increase in the number of employed parents staying at home with their newborns. About 211,000 parents accessed benefits in 2001/02 compared to almost 180,00 in 2000/01, an increase of close to 18%. About 90% of new parental claims were for women. However, parental claims by men increased by almost 80% from 13,000 in 2000/01 to

23,120 in 2001/02, showing that the new rules gave fathers greater opportunity to share the caregiver role during the first year of the child's life.

The success of this initiative is also due to the fact that all jurisdictions in Canada amended their labour legislation to enable parents to take advantage of the longer parental benefit period and still maintain job protection.

To respond to situations where a child is hospitalized during parental leave, in 2002 the parental benefit period was increased by the number of weeks of hospitalization, up to a maximum of 104 weeks. As well, maximum benefits for parents claiming a combination of maternity, parental and sickness benefits (where the sickness benefits are related to the parent) for themselves was extended from 50 to 65 weeks.

The Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB) provides additional money to low-income families with children. In 2002-03, the CCTB provided \$8.1 Billion to 3.2 million families with 5.7 million children, or more than 80% of families with children in Canada. A progress report in 2002 estimated that as a result of the NCB, approximately 55,000 children in 22,900 families were no longer living in a low-income situation, representing 5.1% fewer low-income families, with a higher average annual disposable income of almost \$1,800 or 7.5%. The NCB Supplement was increased in July 2003 and further increases are planned for July 2005 and July 2006.

Child Care and other Care-Giving Measures – In 2003, a Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care was approved to specifically support early learning and childcare, including a federal contribution of \$1.059 Billion over 5 years. Also in 2003, the federally funded First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative and Aboriginal Head Start programs provided over 17,500 early learning and childcare spaces for children in Aboriginal communities.

Since January 2004, six weeks of Employment Insurance Compassionate Care benefits are available to enable eligible workers to take a temporary absence from work to provide care or support to a child, parent, spouse or common-law partner who has a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death within six months. Eight weeks of job protection for compassionate leave are provided for federally regulated employees. Six provinces and two territories also provide protection and over the coming year, it is expected that other jurisdictions will introduce similar changes.

Public pensions have been essential in reducing poverty among elderly women. The Canada and Quebec Pension Plans (C/QPP) cover workers in all jurisdictions and provide retirement, survivor and disability benefits. They include provisions to help protect a contributor's benefits from periods of low or no earnings, including periods raising young children, credit-splitting and full indexation of benefits, features seldom available in private plans. The percentage of senior women who obtained part of their income from the C/QPP increased from 61.9% to 77.6% between 1990 and 1999. And in 2003, 86% of women received CPP Survivors benefits compared to 14% of men. Other components of Canada's retirement income system provide assistance to those with little or no other income and are particularly important for women, who comprise 65% of guaranteed income recipients.

The other key component of Canada's retirement income system, the Old Age Security program (OAS), includes support to low-income women, particularly through the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) and the Allowance. These programs are instrumental in improving the financial security of women by providing assistance to those with little or no other retirement

income and are particularly important for women, who comprise 65% of GIS recipients and 91% of Allowance recipients.

As a result of changes to public pensions in 2000, same-sex common-law partners now have the same benefits and obligations as opposite-sex common-law partners. This positively impacts surviving women in same-sex relationships in that they can now receive survivors and other low-income benefits that were previously unavailable.

(ii) Elimination of Violence Against Women

Canada supports a multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral and harmonized approach to addressing violence against women and children to simultaneously work with specific sectors, such as schools, the workplace, and the health, social and criminal justice systems, and to implement broader strategies to address the root cause of violence: the inequality of women.

In 2002, Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women released a report entitled *Assessing Violence Against Women: A Statistical Profile*, which indicated that the incidence and even the severity of spousal violence against women appears to have declined slightly over the past decade. This may be the result of several factors, including increased confidence in the administration of the criminal justice system (more reports to police), reduced societal tolerance for spousal violence, and the increased availability of shelters (from 18 in 1975 to 524 in 2002) and other needed services. In 2003, Ministers placed priority attention on the circumstances of Aboriginal women both on- and off-reserve, with violence as one of the priorities, and agreed to develop a plan of action to guide their work in this important area. Status of Women Canada, as part of its contribution, has allocated its share of Family Violence Initiative (FVI) of \$1Million over four years to national initiatives by Aboriginal women's organizations.

The first five-year report of the current federal FVI completed in 2002, described progress achieved and affirmed the need to continue the course. The FVI continues to make significant advances in enhancing the national capacity for policy-relevant data collection and analysis as well as research and evaluation. As a result, policy-makers, researchers and community groups are better equipped with timely information to support action.

In 2001, a review of the national pro-charging and pro-prosecution policies for spousal abuse was undertaken at the direction of FPT Ministers Responsible for Justice. The resulting 2003 report assessed criminal justice measures undertaken during the preceding 20 years and identified three key objectives for responding to spousal abuse: criminalizing spousal abuse, promoting the safety and security of the victim; and maintaining confidence in the administration of justice. The report recommended the retention of pro-charging and pro-prosecution policies in spousal abuse cases as well as the development and enhancement of supporting programs, services and structures.

Eight provinces and territories have implemented civil domestic violence legislation that provides avenues of support for victims of intimate domestic violence in addition to protections offered under the *Criminal Code of Canada*. Several jurisdictions have also created Domestic Violence Courts, which provide a range of specialized services, such as advocacy and support for women and children, expedited court processing, better victim cooperation and support, translation services, greater conviction rates and appropriate sentencing, including treatment for abusers.

Criminal law reforms initiated since 2001 include, measures to create a new offence of voyeurism, and stronger child pornography provisions. There is also increased protection to children from sexual exploitation through the creation of new offences to target criminals who use the Internet to lure and exploit children or who transmit, make available, export or intentionally access child pornography. In addition, reforms were made to help ensure that participating in the criminal justice system is less traumatic for the victim or witness.

The regulations supporting the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA)* address key areas to better protect women from violence. A sponsorship bar against sponsors in the Family Class exists where they have been found guilty of criminal convictions for offences related to bodily harm or the threat of bodily harm in the context of the family, including common-law and conjugal partners. A sponsorship bar also exists for those with criminal convictions related to crimes of a sexual nature, or an attempt or threat to commit such an offence against anyone. The federal government also provides information to immigrants and refugees emphasizing that there are laws in place to protect women from violence and abuse. Funding is also available to immigrant and refugee service-providing agencies for referral to existing services in the community.

The policy development process of the new *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA)* is an example of how legislative measures are being adopted in Canada to strengthen human right protection. The *IRPA* provides that individuals subject to a removal order from Canada may request protection prior to removal to a country where they may be at risk. In the course of their training, officers responsible for these determinations are given extensive guidance on how to apply international conventions, including CEDAW, as well as the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Guidelines on Gender-Based Persecution*. Sensitivity to protection issues affecting women, children, and in relation to sexual orientation is also provided.

Trafficking in Persons

The federal Interdepartmental Working Group on Trafficking in Persons (IWG TIP) is mandated to coordinate federal anti-trafficking efforts and is currently developing a federal anti-trafficking strategy. Specific anti-trafficking measures recently supported by the federal government through the IWG TIP include the March 2004 announcement that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police will establish a human trafficking unit to coordinate domestic and international human trafficking investigations. Also announced at the same time was the review of the *Criminal Code* to assess the need for additional reforms to strengthen the criminal justice system's response to trafficking in persons. This review is on-going.

In March, 2004, a training seminar on TIP for police, prosecutors, immigration, customs and consular officials, was co-hosted by the federal Department of Justice and the International Organization for Migration. Also in 2004, the federal government launched an anti-trafficking poster to inform Canadians about human trafficking in Canada and explain that it is a serious crime. The poster will be distributed through police stations, victim's services, community centres, refugee and immigrant centres and other places throughout the country as well as overseas. The poster complements an anti-trafficking brochure that is also being distributed overseas in fourteen languages.

Furthermore, the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA)* includes offences with penalties including life imprisonment and/or a fine up to \$1 million. In accordance with the *Trafficking Protocol*, sentencing considerations include the presence of aggravating circumstances, such as physical harm, degrading treatment, sexual exploitation, etc. suffered by

the trafficked person. There may be situations where a trafficking victim may seek protection in Canada as a refugee.

(iii) Women and Armed Conflict

Through the Women at Risk Program, which addresses the needs of refugee women in situations where their safety cannot be ensured, Canada has given over 2,250 women and children a safe home and the opportunity for a better future since the beginning of the program in 1988. The Urgent Protection Program, enables Canada to respond to requests from the United Nations High Commission on Refugees to assist persons who qualify for resettlement and who are in need of urgent protection because of immediate threats to life, liberty or physical safety. Refugee women have been the primary beneficiaries of this program, particularly because of the lack of support and protection otherwise available to them.

At the international level, Canada was pleased to be a member of the Security Council when Security Council Resolution 1296 on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict and Security Council Resolution 1325 (SCR 1325) on Women, Peace and Security were adopted, in 2000. In 2001 Canada created the Canadian Committee on Women, Peace and Security comprised of parliamentarians, civil society representatives and government officials whose mandate focuses on implementing SCR1325. The Committee's work focuses on advocacy, capacity-building, training, and developing links between Canadian women and women in conflict and post-conflict areas to support women's participation and the incorporation of a gender perspective in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building processes.

(iv) Education

Under Canada's constitutional division of powers, education is under provincial-territorial jurisdiction.

Post-Secondary Education - In all jurisdictions, assistance is available for those who need help in financing their studies. For example, the Canada Student Loans Program ensures access for more than 350,000 students each year and is recognized by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as one of the most effective systems in the world; about 58% of borrowers are women. Recent improvements include increasing loan limits; provisions to address childcare costs; broadening eligible expenses to include new essentials, such as computers; creating a new first year grant for students from low income families and a new annual grant for students with permanent disabilities; measures to help students who have repayment difficulties; allowing students to earn more while they learn; and allowing Protected Persons, including Convention Refugees, to apply. These improvements will further help women, many of whom study part-time and earn less than their male counterparts.

Since 2000, the federal government has also provided scholarships to over 100,000 students annually through an endowment fund of \$2.5 billion. This initiative helps students who demonstrate high levels of need and merit in accessing post-secondary education. Female lone-parents benefit greatly from these scholarships. Other measures help many families start saving early for their child's education, including a new "learning bond" for every child born to a low-income family.

Furthermore, in 2004, the Government of Canada provided a grant of \$85million to the Canadian Council on Learning to promote and support evidenced-based decision-making in all

areas of lifelong learning, which will help provide better support to women in their education and career objectives.

First Nations Education - The United Nations (UN) Human Development Index clearly shows that education is a key contributor to First Nations women in closing the gap with the rest of Canadian society in terms of socio-economic well-being. In 2001, 5.3% of Aboriginal women had a university degree, compared with 15% of non-Aboriginal women. However, some improvement has been observed. In particular, Aboriginal women account for two-thirds of Aboriginal post-secondary education graduates.

In 2002, a National Working Group (WG) on Education was appointed and of the 13 Aboriginal expert members, six were women. The WG was tasked to research and provide advice on how to better foster excellence in First Nations education, celebrate some of the successes achieved and help narrow the gap in academic results between First Nations students and other Canadian students. That year the WG submitted its final report with a focus on on-reserve education but, given the high percentage of First Nation students attending provincial schools, it also addresses the needs of First Nation students in those schools. The report contains 27 recommendations that are intended to facilitate the establishment of a high-quality First Nation education system, grounded in indigenous knowledge.

Immigrant and Refugee Education and Training - Canada provides funding for immigrant settlement and integration programs, including basic language instruction for adult immigrants and refugees. Measures have been taken to ensure women's access to adult literacy and language instruction classes by providing components such as childcare, flexible hours of instruction, and a transportation allowance.

(v) Women's Participation in the Workplace and in Decision-Making Positions and Positions of Power

Women in the Workplace

With respect to women's involvement in the labour market, time use surveys show that the gap in the division of paid and unpaid work between women and men is narrowing, reflecting, in particular, increases in the amount of time women spend in paid work. More women have entered the labour force as well. In 2003 the participation rate for women in the labour force was 61.6% compared to 73.6% for men. Women are still largely responsible for unpaid work activities in the home. In 2001, about 16% of women (age 15 and older) devoted 30 hours or more, per week, to unpaid childcare, compared to 7% of men. Similarly, 21% of women spent more than 30 hours per week on unpaid housework, compared to 8% of men.

Women have also increased their share of total employment in managerial positions. In 2003, women accounted for 35% of all those employed in managerial positions, up from 29% in 1987. Among managers, however, women account for higher representation in lower-level management positions making up only 24% of senior managers, compared with 36% at all other levels.

Women account for a minority among professionals employed in natural sciences, engineering and mathematics. In 2003, only 22% of professionals in these occupations were women, a marginal increase since 1987 when women accounted for 17% of these positions.

In 2003, a federal Task Force Report on Women Entrepreneurs resulted in a number of government commitments, such as the creation of a national Women's Economic Forum, the development and planning of an Aboriginal Women's Business Planning Guide entitled *Journey to Success*, and a new Canadian Women's Innovation Award. Provinces and territories also provide supports. For example, in Saskatchewan, the Small Business Loans Association Program has provided over \$11M in loans to women business owners and entrepreneurs since it commenced in 1989.

In 2004, the federal Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy (AHRDS) was renewed until 2009. Introduced in 1999 as a five-year initiative to help Aboriginal people prepare for, find, get and keep jobs, it has directly helped 58,044 clients find jobs and served close to 170,000 people through 255,341 interventions. The AHRDS directly targets Aboriginal women through a childcare component that has created over 7,800 childcare spaces and over 1,000 care giving jobs to date.

Furthermore, Canada's Employment Equity Act, in effect since 1995, aims to ensure fair representation of women and other target groups throughout the federal public service. As of 2003, women accounted for 52.8% of all federal public service employees, 40.3% of the scientific and professional categories, and 33.8% of the executive category.

Women in Politics

Promoting women's participation and representation in governance and decision-making at all levels of political, economic and social life is an essential step in improving women's status and well being within society. Strategies to eliminate both structural and attitudinal barriers are needed to achieve the full and equal participation of women in public and private life.

At the political level, Canada's approach has been to encourage political parties to set targets, rather than to take legal or constitutional measures. Many of Canada's major political parties have established programs to encourage and support women federal candidates. Measures include earmarking campaign funds for women, including grants for child care, household help, lost wages and campaign costs and mechanisms to achieve greater gender parity on executives, governing bodies and committees.

Canada's House of Commons, comprised of 308 Members of Parliament (MP's), currently includes 65 women MP's or 21.1%. During the last Federal election in June 2004, there were 391 women and among the 1685 candidates. With regards to the Senate (upper chamber), 33 of the current 95 Senators are women. While the number of women Cabinet Ministers in the federal government has decreased from 11 to 8 following the 2004 election, the proportion of women in the Supreme Court has increased, with women now accounting for 4 of the 9 Supreme Court Justices.

(vi) Health

Women are frequent users of health care services: they represent 80% of health care professionals in Canada and are often informal caregivers for family members. It is therefore important for the health system to monitor and address gender as a key determinant of health and assess how various programs and policies may affect women differently.

Some specific health programs and initiatives undertaken since Canada's last report include:

- In 2002, Canada launched the Women's Health Indicators project, a research initiative that takes gender and diversity into account to more accurately measure and monitor changes in women's health status/outcomes. The 2003 Women's Health Surveillance Report provides information and statistics on determinants of health, health status and outcomes for women and includes, as a key objective, supporting the development of health policy, public health programs and interventions to improve the health of Canadian women.
- Sexual and reproductive health is an area of importance, particularly given the high rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) observed over the last five years and the potential long-term health consequences especially for women. It is also important that women have access to a range of family planning methods and educational resources about their sexual health. Some provinces within Canada, such as British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Quebec, have enacted legislative changes allowing pharmacists in those provinces to prescribe emergency contraception to women. Furthermore, in 2004, Canada moved forward to allow access to levonorgestrel -- known as the "morning after pill" -- without a doctor's prescription. The measure would mean more timely access to emergency contraceptives for women who need them.
- Since 1998, the Canadian Strategy on HIV/AIDS (CSHA) has provided stable, ongoing funding of \$42.2 million annually to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Canada. Canada recently announced that funding for the CSHA would double to \$84.4 million annually by 2008-09. Through the CSHA there have been several initiatives related to gender and HIV/AIDS, including research on perinatal HIV transmission and microbicides and the development of resource materials for survivors of sexual assault and service providers. The CSHA also provides funding through the AIDS Community Action Program to support local and regional projects, many of which are focused on women.
- In recent years, an increase in the HIV/AIDS epidemic has been observed in some Aboriginal communities, particularly those in inner-cities. Aboriginal women represent nearly half (45.3%) of all positive HIV test reports among Aboriginal persons, compared to non-Aboriginal women that represent 19.9% of positive reports for non-Aboriginal persons. Federal support is provided to the activities of the Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association in the areas of HIV education, prevention, care, treatment and support of Inuit women.
- Over 2 million Canadians have diabetes and among First Nations people, the prevalence is three to five times the national average. Gestational diabetes affects women with varying severity during pregnancy and while about 3-5% of women in the general North American population are affected, the rates for Aboriginal women range from 3.2% to as high as 14.5%. Under the Canadian Diabetes Strategy, the Government of Canada allocated \$115 million dollars over five years (1999 - 2004) to develop measures needed to prevent, control and combat diabetes, with \$58 million of this funding allocated to the Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative.
- Canada signed the *Framework Convention on Tobacco Control* in 2003, which sets minimum standards for domestic tobacco control initiatives, and provides a framework for international co-operation. It promotes the full participation of women at all levels of policy-making and implementation and highlights the need for gender-specific tobacco control strategies.

IV. Future Actions to Advance the Implementation of the CIM Strategic Plan of Action

(i) At the National Level

Details on the Government of Canada's follow-up to the *Federal Plan on Gender Equality* and the first phase of the *Agenda for Gender Equality* have been outlined above (Section 1). Furthermore, in March 2004, the Minister of State (Multiculturalism, Status of Women) began a series of dialogues across Canada to discuss accountability mechanisms. The input will be used to develop future directions for the Government's agenda on gender equality for the next five-year period (2005-2010).

Status of Women Canada's publications can be obtained through its website at <http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca>

(ii) At the Regional/Hemispheric level

At the Hemispheric level, Canada will continue to be actively involved in the work of the Inter American Commission of Women (CIM). Canada has actively encouraged the CIM to work with other units of the OAS to promote the consideration of a gender perspective as a priority throughout the Organization. Canada has also presented annual resolutions encouraging the Secretary General to increase the number of women in management positions at the OAS.

As we move towards the Fourth Summit of the Americas (Argentina, 2005), Canada will continue its work to advance gender equality and the promotion of women's human rights in the Summit process, and to encourage follow-up and implementation of recommendations made at the Second Meeting of Ministers or Other Highest-ranking Authorities Responsible for the Advancement of Women in the Member States of the OAS (REMIM II), which took place in Washington D.C., April 2004. Canada, as a member of the Steering Committee and Executive Council of the Summit process, will continue to work with like-minded partners in consultation with relevant stakeholders, to build on the progress achieved to date through the Summit of the Americas process. The National Reports on Summit Implementation, in particular, will continue to provide a useful mechanism to monitor progress made in implementing Summit-related commitments, including those related to gender equality, and to identify problem areas where more efforts are required.

In this regard, Canada is also supportive of the CIM serving as Technical Advisor to the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), in order to further advance gender mainstreaming in the next Summit of the Americas Plan of Action and Declaration, and promote the advancement of women's human rights and gender equality in the Summit processes. It will be critical for Canada, other Member States and the CIM to play a strong role in this regard, in order to build upon the gains made in advancing gender equality during the Quebec City Summit of the Americas (2001).

Canada's Official Development Assistance in the Americas

Canadian Official Development Assistance (ODA) delivered through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) supports gender equality through a variety of initiatives and

through a wide range of partners. Canada's ODA programming is guided by CIDA's *Policy on Gender Equality* (GE) and based on over 20 years of policy work and programming in GE. CIDA considers gender equality and women's empowerment as essential in reducing poverty and inequity in the Americas.

CIDA provides specific support to a number of OAS institutions or agencies such as: the Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development, the OAS Trade Unit; and the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy. These provide opportunities for mainstreaming gender in program delivery at the OAS in collaboration with the CIM. As well as integrating gender equality into projects, CIDA's program in the Americas supports gender equality through specific projects and through policy dialogue with partner countries and multilateral organizations. CIDA also supports the work of Canadian civil society organizations working to build capacity of southern partners and stronger north-south relationships including on gender equality.

HIGHLIGHTS OF BILATERAL SUPPORT TO GENDER EQUALITY:

South America Gender Equality Funds Phase II: (\$10M - 1999-2006) Responsive Funds which contribute to strengthening the political participation of women in local decision making (in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia), reducing gender discrimination in work (Brazil) and addressing violence against women (Paraguay). In Paraguay the Fund has contributed to the development of the national law in relation to domestic violence.

Caribbean Gender Equality Program Phase II: (\$7.5M 2001-2006) Increases opportunities for women to participate in the sustainable development of their societies by supporting the improvement of equitable relations between women and men. The program is supporting gender mainstreaming within government and civil society organizations and works specifically on the issue of domestic violence. Among other activities in this area, support has been provided to the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) for its work of assessing the impact of trade agreements on the livelihoods of women. Support was also provided for a capacity building workshop for Heads of gender bureaux in the region on the margins of the Fourth Caribbean Ministerial Conference on Women (February 11-13, 2004).

Haiti gender equality fund, **Kore Fanm:** (\$4M, 2003-2008) focuses on the areas of 1) women's rights in the family and community; 2) gender based violence; and 3) citizenship and participation of women in decision-making. Through Kore Fanm, training on gender-based analysis (GBA) has been provided to the Haitian Ministry for women's affairs. The training was based on the GBA training modules developed at SWC and will be delivered by a consultant who received SWC training. SWC's GBA Unit has facilitated the initiative.

OAS Gender Mainstreaming Project: (\$.5M 2001-2004). Promotes gender mainstreaming in the OAS. This highly successful project has supported the OAS training division, working in conjunction with the CIM to develop a gender training program to meet OAS needs, collect gender screening and analysis tools, improve the OAS websites, and use Canadian gender specialists to train several hundred OAS staff. Planning is under way for an extension of the project with a view to consolidate the results achieved to date.

Women's Empowerment Program - Guatemala: (\$3.0 M 2002- 2007). Institutional strengthening program of Guatemala's Presidential Secretariat for Women (SEPREM) and establishment of a fund that will collaborate with and support the participation of civil and

government institutions in the promotion and implementation of the *National Policy of Promotion and Development of Guatemalan Women*.

Support to the National Human Rights Ombudsman of Peru (\$4.8 M, 2003-2008): This project is designed to reinforce the management and technical capacity of the National Ombudsman (*Defensor del Pueblo*), specifically in monitoring of the rule of law, promotion and protection of human rights, improving the responsiveness of public services to Peruvians, and alternative conflict resolution. The project is also specifically supporting the capacity for addressing gender equality of the office of the National Ombudsman.

Guatemala Sexual & Reproductive Health Care, (\$7M 2001-2005) implemented by UNFPA working in partnership with the Ministry of Health and other relevant ministries to address the key constraints to meeting the large unmet demand for reproductive health services.

Guatemala Sexual and Reproductive Health Services to the Adolescents (\$3M, 2002-2006) implemented by UNICEF working with the Government to strengthen the delivery and quality of adolescent sexual and reproductive health services including AIDS prevention.

Institutional Strengthening of the Criminal Justice Procedure Reform (\$1.7M, 2003-2006) Implemented by the Justice Studies Center of the Americas, the project will contribute to the change of practices in the Criminal Justice System to achieve greater transparency and efficiency, as well as better conditions for the respect of the human rights of women and men. The project will undertake a number of studies (including one on gender and judicial reform), support networking and develop and deliver training programs on specific issues.

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