



Organization of
American States



Political Violence against Women in the framework of the Belém do Pará Convention

Experts' Meeting and Public Event Washington, DC – February 25th 2015

Introduction

In 1994, the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) promoted the adoption of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of violence against women. Known as the Belém do Pará Convention, this instrument entered into force on March 5th 1995 and has thus far been ratified by 32 States.

Five years after the Convention entered into force, the CIM conducted research that found that the Convention's objectives were not being achieved. This led to the establishment of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI) in 2004. By establishing the MESECVI, the States Party expressed their political will to engage with a consensus-based and independent system to examine the progress towards the fulfillment of the Convention, while agreeing to implement its recommendations.

Since its creation, the MESECVI has undertaken substantive efforts to identify the challenges faced by State Party to the Convention in protecting women's right to live free of violence, making recommendations to the States on the measures they can take to conquer those challenges.

Among the main findings of the MESECVI is the absence of norms concerning violence against women in the public sphere. The MESECVI acknowledges the progress achieved by States in preventing and punishing of violence against women in the private sphere. However, those steps do not include all manifestations of violence against women, especially those perpetrated in the public sphere.

In this framework, the CIM/MESECVI has noted a growing concern with violence against women in politics. This refers to the violence perpetrated against women participating in politics, limiting and in some cases preventing them from exercising their political rights.

The political rights of women are enshrined as human rights both in the Inter-American System and the Universal System. The Belém do Pará Convention, Article 4, paragraph j, states that "Every woman has the right to the recognition, enjoyment, exercise and protection of all human rights and freedoms" including "the right to have equal access to the public service of her country and to take part in the conduct of public affairs, including decision-making." Likewise, Article 5 of the Convention states that

With the support of:

Canada 

"the States Party recognize that violence against women prevents and nullifies the exercise of these rights".

According to the research conducted in the region, the increasing visibility of such violence on the public agenda has gone hand-in-hand with an increase in the number of women in positions of political representation. This has also been linked to the establishment of positive action measures as gender quotas and parity. In its Report on women's political participation in the Americas, the IACHR also stated its concern about "the use of coercion against women voters, stemming from men's coercive control of women in the family."¹

Some countries in the region have already taken steps to effectively respond to this violence. Bolivia stands out as the only country that has adopted a specific law on the matter, the 2012 "Law against Political Harassment and Violence." Other countries such as Mexico, Peru, Costa Rica and Ecuador have submitted bills in their respective parliaments to punish this violence.

In view of this situation and in response to the resolution adopted during the Fourth Regular Session of the CIM Executive Committee 2013-2015 (October 2014), to address the issue of harassment/political violence, CIM/MESECVI has prepared the project "*The protection of women's political rights for addressing political violence in The Americas*," which aims to strengthen the capacities of States Party to the Belém do Pará Convention to effectively respond to this violence, particularly through the enactment of laws on this matter, and to protect and guarantee the exercise of women's political rights. This project includes a meeting of experts and a public event

Objectives and expected results from the Expert Group Meeting

The CIM/MESECVI has convened a closed door Expert Group Meeting (EGM) with the goal of analyzing the challenges facing the countries of the region to effectively respond to the problem of violence against women in politics, particularly through the enactment of laws. As a result of the meeting, the CIM/MESECVI aims to identify the most important elements that a law on the matter should contain.

The CIM/MESECVI has a specific interest in engaging with the Experts on the following points:

- Experiences of countries in the region that have approved/submitted policy proposals on the matter
- Conceptualization of violence against women in politics
- Rights protected and diversity of women (particularly indigenous and Afro-descendant women)
- Prevention
- Investigation and attention
- Types of sanction
- Reparation
- The role of the political parties

The EGM will be organized within the framework of an open dialogue format between the experts, taking into account the objective of the meeting and the discussion points. We are requesting to prepare a brief presentation to the experts from those countries where law proposals on violence against women in politics have been presented in parliament. For the rest of the experts convened there is no need to prepare presentations.

¹ IACHR (2011): *The road to substantive democracy: women's political participation in the Americas*. Washington, DC

AGENDA

Wednesday, February 25

9:00 Welcome. Carmen Moreno, Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM/OAS)

9:10 Methodology for the meeting. Luz Patricia Mejía, Technical Secretary of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI/CIM)

9:15 a. Presentations by the experts:

- Bolivia
- Mexico
- Costa Rica
- Peru
- Ecuador

b. Interventions from all the experts

c. Open discussion

d. Final conclusions and recommendations by each expert

Moderator: Luz Patricia Mejía, Technical Secretary of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI/CIM)

1.00 Closing

Event venue

The General Secretariat Building of the OAS is located on 1889 F Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. (corner of 19th and F Streets)
Rubén Darío Room (8th floor)