



FOLLOW-UP MECHANISM
CONVENTION OF BELÉM DO PARÁ (MESECVI)
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Declaration on Gender and Women`s Empowerment as a Benefit to Humanity

The Committee of Experts (CEVI) of the Follow-up Mechanism for the Implementation of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, "Convention of Belem do Pará" (MESECVI),

RECOGNIZING:

That the Charter of the Organization of American States (1948) states that "All human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, creed or social status, have the right to material well-being and spiritual development in conditions of freedom, dignity, equality of opportunity and economic security;"

That the American Convention on Human Rights (1969) affirms that "All persons are equal before the law. Consequently, they have the right, without discrimination, to equal protection of the law;"

That the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights "Protocol of San Salvador" (1988) establishes the obligation to "...guarantee the exercise of the rights enunciated therein, without any discrimination on the grounds of race, color, sex, language, religion, political opinions or of any other nature, national or social origin, economic position, birth or any other social condition;" and

That the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, "Convention of Belém do Pará" (1994) states that "Every woman may freely and fully exercise her civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and shall have the full protection of those rights enshrined in regional and international human rights instruments ...; "

That equality between men and women and the empowerment of all women and girls is an objective of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG, 2015) adopted by the 193 countries of the world;

That the States Party to the Convention of Belém do Pará adopted the Montevideo Strategy for the Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda in the Framework of Sustainable Development by 2030 (2016) in order to make the mainstreaming of equality between women and men possible in all the SDGs in our region;

REITERATING that gender-based violence against women is one of the fundamental social, political, and economic means through which subordination of women with respect to men is perpetuated¹;

RECALLING that art. 6 of the Convention of Belém do Pará states that *"The right of every woman to a life free of violence includes, among others: a. the right of women to be free from all forms of discrimination, and b. the right of women to be valued and educated free of stereotyped behavioral patterns and social and cultural practices based on concepts of inferiority or subordination"* and that according to arts. 8 (b) of the same Convention and art. 5 of the CEDAW, the States Party agreed to adopt appropriate measures to modify these stereotyped patterns with the goal of eliminating prejudices and customary practices of any kind that perpetuate inequality and violence against women;

RECALLING also the concerns highlighted by the CEVI and the commitments adopted by the States in the "Declaration of Pachuca: Strengthening efforts to prevent violence against women," particularly those of:

- Coordinating with the relevant government agencies to incorporate a gender and human rights approach into the educational curricula and non-formal educational environments; and
- Expanding the work of education for human rights and gender equality beyond the education sector to include other spaces and key actors, such as mothers and fathers, trade unions and organizations of educators and religious groups, among others;

HIGHLY CONCERNED about the proliferation and impact of discourses and campaigns organized by conservative sectors that justify discrimination, harmful practices, the sexual division of labor, or the exclusion of women from public and political power, that question the advances in the recognition of the rights of women, misrepresenting concepts, misinforming and confusing the public and opposing laws and public policies that promote the physical, economic, political and decision-making autonomy of women;

NOTING that the media and advertising industry reproduce these patriarchal cultural patterns, revictimize women and continue to use their image as an object of consumption or as exclusively linked to the reproductive role;

ALARMED by the approval of regressive laws that are contrary to women's rights and the achievements made in terms of equality and freedom from violence;

¹ CEDAW Committee, Recommendation 35

CONCERNED about the obstacles to the application of existing laws that incorporate the principles and obligations confirmed upon the approval of the Convention of Belém do Pará and the CEDAW;

CONCERNED about the rejection of an education free from stereotypes of behavior and social and cultural practices based on concepts of inferiority or subordination of women, and the rejection of sexual education, due to the use of supposed religious or moral values in order to repress human rights;

WELCOMING WITH ENDORSEMENT the "Inter-American Guidelines for Gender Equality as a Benefit to Humanity" approved by the delegates of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) of the OAS.

SHARING the affirmations of the guidelines, that the discourses against women's rights are based in intolerant conceptions that promote fear and guilt in women, identifying the exercise of their rights with social decomposition or debauchery, and in some cases justifying violence against them based on moral judgments about the life and conduct of victims, promoting impunity for acts of discrimination and violence, including hate speech.

DECLARES:

That discourses and campaigns that defend patriarchal social, political and economic order as natural and contemptuously refer to the analytical category "gender" as an ideology, hinder substantive equality and deepen machismo and misogyny, reinforce and perpetuate stereotypes, discriminatory gender roles, and a culture of intolerance that affects democratic coexistence, obstructing the exercise of women's rights and legitimizing violence against women;

That equality between men and women and life free from violence are human rights widely recognized in the treaties that make up the international ius cogens, and that States must strictly comply with the duty of due diligence to guarantee them;

That discrimination and violence against women constitute violations of human rights, therefore justifications based on beliefs or religious or cultural values are not admissible;

Gender is an analytical category based in social sciences. It is not an ideology, rather a methodological instrument used to examine and reveal unequal relations of power between men and women in order to defend the human rights of women;

RECOMMENDS:

Strengthening institutional and social fabric for the development and cultural advancement of gender equality as a benefit to humanity;

Deepening the gender focus in laws and public policies, including in education at all levels and fields with the goal of guaranteeing equality of rights and opportunities, and a life free of violence for women;

Empowering women towards the full exercise of their rights as well as strengthening protective mechanisms and access to justice;

Encouraging the deepening and dissemination of knowledge and cultural and artistic production with a gender perspective in order to promote equality, non-discrimination and the strengthening of the secular State;

Working with the media and communications professionals so that they may become active participants in favor of cultural change for equality and non-discrimination.