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XLVII Regular Session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States

**Remarks by the President of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM),
Ana María Romero-Lozada, during the Third Plenary Session**

*June 22nd 2017
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EXCELLENCIES, MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE OAS MEMBER STATES,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATIONS OF THE OAS MEMBER STATES,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

Today, in this beautiful and emblematic coastal city of Mexico, in my role as the President of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), I bring to you the voice of the Ministers and High Authorities of the National Machineries for the Advancement of Women in the Americas, and the sentiment of the almost 500 million women of the continent whom I represent in all their diversity, among them, 25 million indigenous and Afro-descendant women.

This year, the CIM celebrates its 89th anniversary on the scene of American international politics, watching over with unshakable conviction the rights of women. This Commission emerged as an organizational and institutionalized platform, a forum within the reach of the women of America to defend their rights, which were progressively incorporated into the national legislations of the OAS Member States.

Today, I reiterate our commitment to this path of achieving sustainable development in democracy and freedom, with gender equality, respect and the unrestricted exercise of human rights for women in all their diversity, condition and situation throughout their lives and with equal participation in making the most important decisions in our countries.

America is a diverse, cultural and politically heterogeneous continent in wealth, but with enormous differences. While most of our citizens live in democracy, we face common difficulties and challenges in overcoming economic inequality, ensuring political participation and eradicating poverty and social exclusion.

Situations of armed conflict and post-conflict, corruption, organized crime, and trafficking in persons, gender-based violence, environmental vulnerability, the existence of patriarchal and violent cultural patterns, within a culture of privilege, and the unfair social allocation of care roles, among other factors, violate the rights of women, seriously affecting their quality of life.

However, there is progress. Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development promotes gender equality and the eradication of violence against women. To achieve this, the empowerment of women and their full autonomy is necessary.

Gender equality demands access to equal and integral education for women and men, free of stereotypes, with emphasis on science and technology, so that women have more opportunities in their personal and professional development, in order to improve their quality of life.

Gender equality requires inclusive education systems, especially for rural and indigenous women, who respect, reassess and protect their traditional and ancestral knowledge and ensure the reproduction of life and care of land, territory and the environment in a sustainable way.

The effective exercise of equality also requires women to achieve economic autonomy. This requires macroeconomic policies that promote the social, economic and political empowerment of women, ensure the redistribution of resources and mitigate the negative effects of cycles of economic recession on women's employment.

Redistributive fiscal policies, incentives for economic activity and decent productive employment, equal pay for women and men in similar positions and functions, and investment in public care services for children, adolescents, the elderly and people with disabilities are also necessary to free women from traditional roles.

Gender equality cannot be achieved without eradicating all forms of violence against women, without conquering their full physical autonomy and without respecting their right to a full and happy life.

We stand in solidarity with the millions of women in our region who suffer from the violation of their human rights, their right to decide in freedom, their right to participate in politics without being attacked for it, their right not to be discriminated against because of their ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation, their right to a fair and just job, and their right to a life free of violence.

Let us resolutely tackle all forms of trafficking, violence and femicide, eradicate child marriage and child labour. No more pregnant girls and teens. No more impunity for aggressors, rapists and femicides. We identify with millions of women and men who have marched in all our countries against gender violence, claiming NOT ONE LESS [*NI UNA MENOS*]!

Ladies and Gentlemen Foreign Ministers:

Since its creation, the CIM has been the forum where women's political rights are defended, and concrete results have been achieved, such as the recognition of the right to vote, which has clearly contributed to strengthening democracy in our continent.

In keeping with this historic legacy, the Ministers and High Authorities of the National Machineries for the Advancement of Women are optimistic about the possibility of making further progress in the Member States of the OAS and in their external policies for the empowerment of women in the Americas.

An indispensable condition for the success of this foreign policy is to fully guarantee that women in our countries achieve their political autonomy and fully exercise their right to representation and participation in decisions at all levels of government, institutions and parties, free from discrimination, harassment and repression.

Respectfully, I invoke here today that this General Assembly continue its efforts to eradicate the abuses against women that seek to silence their voices in defense of democracy, freedom and the Rule of Law. I pay homage to all mothers, daughters and wives who are deprived of their liberty and their rights by reason of their ideas.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Before this General Assembly, we ratify the will to work and fight for the EQUAL rights of women. That is our true north, and that is why we are here, firm and united, to build a true egalitarian, free and inclusive democracy for the women and men of our America.