



Communique Committee of Experts

Committee of Experts expresses concern about the results of a study on violence against women in the Constitutional Court of Colombia

Washington, D.C., November 30, 2020. The [Committee of Experts \(CEVI\)](#) of the Follow-up Mechanism to the [Belém do Pará Convention \(MESECVI\)](#) expresses its concern about the results of the Report from the United States Agency for International Development called "The Layers of the Glass Ceiling: Gender Equity in the Constitutional Court." This study was done at the request of the Constitutional Court of Colombia, evidencing the existence of a series of practices of sexual harassment, workplace harassment, sexist behavior, gender discrimination and sexual abuse, and recognized that several of the victims have not reported due to fear of losing their jobs.

These results are of special concern because there seems to exist, within the Constitutional Court, a context of violence against women with specific patterns of conduct that has direct consequences on the integrity and on the private and sexual life of the victims. This is aggravated by the fact that these are public officials and because there could be labor relations of power and subordination between the victims and the perpetrators.

In this regard, the CEVI has also learned of the existence of an action plan to strengthen mechanisms and scenarios for gender equity within the institution, designed in response to the recommendations from the above-mentioned report. Likewise, the Colombian State had communicated with the CEVI stating that it rejects any act that affects or violates the human rights of women and girls in the national territory, including all areas in which acts of this nature may occur.

The CEVI salutes the Colombian State and the High Court's Committee for Gender Equity, for carrying out these types of processes that are essential to eradicate gender-based violence against women in government institutions. The Committee also highlights the relevance of the development of studies and accompaniments, such as the USAID report, for the design of effective tools that facilitate and encourage reporting, when cases of workplace or sexual harassment arise.

Given this, the Committee wishes to highlight the importance for the States to guarantee the highest standards of protection and respect for the rights of women who work in the Constitutional Court. This is a fundamental institution to deconstruct social and cultural practices based on concepts of inferiority or subordination that are the origin of violence and discrimination against women.

For these reasons, the Committee of Experts requests the Colombian State to: a) act with due diligence, with a gender perspective and immediately and independently, to investigate and sanction these cases of violence against women without adverse consequences for the victims or their families; b) fully repair the damage to the victims and their families, including the legal, psychological and institutional support they require; c) guarantee independent institutional channels to make these complaints without generating a disproportionate cost, of any kind, for the victims; and d) continue generating the necessary actions for a change in the organizational culture, so that the officials part of the justice system can access a life free from violence at work and so that the gender gaps that do not allow equal development within the institution can be bridged within the Constitutional Court and other institutions part of the Judicial Branch.

The Committee of Experts is the technical part of the MESECVI responsible for the analysis and evaluation of the implementation process of the Belém do Pará Convention. It is composed of independent Experts, appointed by each State Party among its nationals, and serve in a personal capacity.