



Meeting of the  
**Presiding Officers  
of the Regional  
Conference on Women**  
in Latin America and the Caribbean  
Santiago, 22–23 January 2019

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Fifty-eighth meeting of the Presiding Officers  
of the Regional Conference on Women  
in Latin America and the Caribbean

Santiago, 22 and 23 January 2019

**ANNOTATED INDEX OF THE POSITION DOCUMENT OF THE FOURTEENTH SESSION  
OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA AND  
THE CARIBBEAN “WOMEN’S AUTONOMY IN CHANGING ECONOMIC SCENARIOS”**

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## BACKGROUND

Pursuant to paragraph 13 of the agreements adopted at their fifty-sixth meeting, held in Havana, from 5 to 6 October 2017, the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean agreed to “adopt [...], for discussion at the fourteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, the theme of women’s autonomy in changing economic scenarios” (ECLAC, 2018d).

At the fifty-seventh meeting of Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Santiago, on 30 and 31 July 2018, the Division for Gender Affairs, ECLAC, presented a road map for the preparatory process for the fourteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, which was adopted by the member States. The road map included a proposal for the annotated index of the position document to be presented at the fifty-eighth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, to be held on 22 and 23 January 2019 at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago (paragraphs 16 and 22 of the agreements adopted at the fifty-seventh meeting of the Presiding Officers) (ECLAC, 2018b).

In accordance with the aforementioned agreements, an annotated index is set out below of the document “Women’s autonomy in changing economic scenarios”. The index sets out the structure of the document, the main thematic areas to be addressed and a brief description of the importance of each issue. In accordance with the agreements adopted at the meetings of the Presiding Officers of the Conference, the document will have a human rights-based, gender equality and intersectional approach and will take into account the contribution of the feminist economy in the analysis of the interdependencies between the macro, meso and micro levels of the economy and address the challenges and opportunities for achieving gender equality in the context of changing scenarios.<sup>1</sup>

It is hoped that the document will form the basis for discussions at the fourteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean and the framework for a strategic plan to implement the government agreements undertaken in the Regional Gender Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through specific public policies.

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<sup>1</sup> See paragraph 18 of the agreements in ECLAC (2018b).



## INTRODUCTION

ECLAC has highlighted equality as a fundamental ethical principle that underpins the conceptualization of sustainable development. Equality involves full ownership and exercise of rights, and women's autonomy is vital to this. ECLAC has also pointed to the need to move towards progressive structural change that promotes the diversification of production structures to make them learning- and innovation-intensive and ensure that they generate skills and quality employment and that they enable a more equitable distribution of productivity gains between capital and labour, and also between men and women (ECLAC, 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2018e).

This change is necessary because Latin America and the Caribbean is facing a complex —and increasingly uncertain— regional and international context, where there have been advances in and obstacles to the achievement of women's autonomy and gender equality.

The position document of the fourteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean will analyse the situation of women in the region and the possible effects of geopolitical, economic, technological, demographic and climate change on women's autonomy and gender equality.

It revisits the ECLAC understanding of women's autonomy as the “capacity to take free and informed decisions about their lives, enabling them to be and act in accordance with their own aspirations and desires, given a historical context that makes those possible” (ECLAC, 2011, p. 9). It also focuses on women's economic autonomy, decision-making autonomy and physical autonomy. Women's economic autonomy involves the possibility of controlling assets and resources and putting an end to women's exclusive responsibility in reproductive tasks and care; physical autonomy refers to the capacity to freely decide on issues of sexuality, reproduction, and the right to live a life free of violence; and decision-making autonomy means full participation in the decisions that affect the lives of women and their communities. These three dimensions of autonomy are interrelated (Benavente and Valdés, 2014). Women's autonomy is a necessary condition for the exercise of rights and the achievement of gender equality.

Furthermore, while empowerment “amplifies women's voices and is expressed in their ability to engage politically” and to overcome structural challenges, “autonomy is the result of societal changes to expand women's spaces of freedom and reduce inequality gaps” (ECLAC, 2015, p. 23).

The document will also have as a central thread a broad perspective of orthodox economics, which transcends the boundaries of the production and monetarization of goods and services, incorporating the theoretical contributions of the feminist economy and bringing to light the interdependence between paid work and unpaid work without which societies cannot function.

### I. GENDER (IN)EQUALITY IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Gender inequalities have macroeconomic, production, institutional and sociocultural determinants. First, poor diversification of production and vulnerability to external shocks hinder equality because they stifle the labour market, restrict the dissemination of skills and result in an unequal distribution of the benefits of growth and the costs of economic adjustments.

Second, the persistence of gender-based violence, the excessive burden of unpaid work and the gender wage gap are barriers to women's full participation in economies, hinder the closing of structural gaps and inhibit innovation, the creation of more diverse work environments and more complex and equal production structures.

The aim of this chapter is to present an overview of the current situation of women and the main challenges to achieving gender equality, taking into account the differences that exist within and between the countries of the region.

## **A. PROGRESS IN GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S AUTONOMY IN THE REGION**

The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have made significant progress in terms of gender equality, women's autonomy and women's rights.

For more than four decades the governments of the region have formulated, collectively and with the active participation of the feminist and women's movement, a series of commitments to women's rights and autonomy that is embodied in the Regional Gender Agenda. This ambitious agenda provides a guide for the region to achieve sustainable development with equality at its core. Furthermore, at the thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, the countries adopted the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030. The Strategy serves as a road map for carrying out the actions and measures needed for the implementation of regional agreements and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (ECLAC, 2017a).

In recent years there have been significant advances in regulatory frameworks, including the abrogation of most of the region's explicitly discriminatory laws. Furthermore, the institutionalization of mechanisms for the advancement of women has yielded substantial results in the implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies in various sectors and levels of State, particularly through the consolidation of national equality plans, as well as in the harmonization of development plans with agreements relating to equality between men and women.

Data from the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean show that electoral system reforms, the adoption of the principle of parity by some countries, the implementation of affirmative action policies such as quota laws and rotation in electoral lists, and sanctions against political parties for non-compliance with the law have played a decisive role in increasing women's presence in parliaments. Between 2008 and 2018, the average percentage of women in the region's parliaments rose from 22% to 30%. Women hold more than 40% of seats in six countries, including Cuba (53.2%), the Plurinational State of Bolivia (53.1%), Nicaragua (45.7%) and, more recently, Mexico (48.2%), Grenada (46.7%) and Costa Rica (45.6%) (ECLAC, 2018f).<sup>2</sup>

Social movements—in particular women's and feminist movements—and public opinion have exposed the pervasiveness of harassment of and violence against women. Over the last decade, 18 countries of the region adopted laws or criminal code reforms which codify the murder of women as femicide or femicide (a separate crime from others already covered in criminal legislation), or qualify gender as an

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<sup>2</sup> Data from the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, updated as of 24 October 2018.

aggravating factor in a murder (ECLAC, 2018f).<sup>3</sup> In addition, the capacities of public institutions —with particular focus on institutions responsible for the administration of justice— have been strengthened to improve administrative records on femicide and to provide responses based on a human rights approach and promoting a culture of non-violence.

The countries of the region have made progress in adopting regulatory frameworks to prevent, punish and eradicate gender-based violence. As the Gender Equality Observatory repository of laws indicates, 13 countries currently have comprehensive violence laws (ECLAC, 2018f).<sup>4</sup>

Significant progress has been made in terms of women’s economic autonomy. The number of women with no income of their own has fallen (from 41.7% in 2002 to 29.4% in 2017) (ECLAC, 2018f). Similarly, there has been a trend towards a narrowing of the gender wage gap, which went from 28.2% in 1990 to 16.1% in 2014 (ECLAC, 2016).

Another area in which the region has made notable progress is the production of statistical data with a gender perspective to inform the design and evaluation of public policy. Nineteen countries in the region have already measured time use (ECLAC, 2017b, 2017c). Countries have also made great strides in the collection of information on violence against women and have built information systems that have brought to light gender inequalities in the three dimensions —economic, social and environmental— of sustainable development.

However, the region still has structural challenges that limit the expansion and sustainability of these advances. Combined with the economic and political situation in many of its countries, this could jeopardize the advances won in recent years (ECLAC, 2016). Greater institutional and budgetary sustainability is required to ensure that progress is not at the mercy of economic or political cycles. Today, there is a noticeable surge of anti-gender equality ideologies that threaten the progress that has been made.

This section provides an overview of the current situation with regard to women’s poverty levels, economic and political participation, education levels and social protection. In addition, it outlines regulatory and institutional progress as well as advances in political participation and the production of information and describes the mechanisms needed to avoid regression.

## **B. STRUCTURAL OBSTACLES OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

While there have been significant advances in the fulfilment of women’s rights, gender inequality is at the root of the prevailing development pattern’s unsustainability. The region’s governments have identified four structural challenges that are entrenched in unequal power relations. These are: socioeconomic

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<sup>3</sup> They are: Argentina (2012), Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) (2014), Brazil (2015), Chile (2010), Colombia (2015), Costa Rica (2007), Dominican Republic (2014), Ecuador (2014), El Salvador (2010), Guatemala (2008), Honduras (2013), Mexico (2012), Nicaragua (2012), Panama (2013), Paraguay (2016), Peru (2013), Bolivia (Plurinational State of) (2013) and Uruguay (2017).

<sup>4</sup> They are: Argentina (2009), Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) (2007), Colombia (2008), Ecuador (2018), El Salvador (2010), Guatemala (2008), Mexico (2007), Nicaragua (2012), Panama (2013), Paraguay (2016), Peru (2015), Bolivia (Plurinational State of) (2013) and Uruguay (2017–2018). It is worth noting that Peru passed a hybrid law, insofar as it covers various forms of violence against women and also covers violence perpetrated against “members of the family group” (Gherardi, 2016).

inequality and the persistence of poverty in the framework of exclusionary growth; the sexual division of labour and unfair social organization of care; discriminatory, violent and patriarchal cultural patterns and the predominance of a culture of privilege; and the concentration of power and hierarchical relations in the public sphere (ECLAC, 2017a).

These bottlenecks are the product of a combination of external factors and endogenous features that are inherent in the socioeconomic and cultural structures of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. They are mutually reinforcing and are manifested in women's lack of physical, economic and decision-making autonomy.

### **1. Socioeconomic inequality and the persistence of poverty in the framework of exclusionary growth**

Latin America and the Caribbean continues to be the world's most unequal region. The development strategies promoted in the region have been unable to break the vicious circle of socioeconomic inequality and gender inequality, low levels of innovation and investment, and high dependence on the dynamics of the external sector and commodity exports. Although progress has been made in recent years in women's participation in the labour force, the labour market participation rate among women in Latin America remains stalled at around 52%, while that of men has climbed to 76.6%. In other words, almost half of all Latin American women have no link with the labour market. However, the unemployment rate among women continues to be significantly higher than among men (10.7% compared to 7.6%) (ECLAC, 2018e).

Furthermore, the link between structural heterogeneity and gender-based occupational segregation in the region means that half of employed women (51.4%) work in low-productivity sectors (microenterprises, domestic service, unskilled self-employment) characterized by precarious working conditions and little interaction with new technologies and innovation. In addition, 11% of employed women are in paid domestic work, a sector with low wages, long working days and high levels of informality and vulnerability (ECLAC, 2018g).

Over the years, there has been a continuing trend of women's overrepresentation in poor households. Although there has been a downward trend in the proportion of women without their own income in the region, one in every three women aged over 15 years and not in full-time education had no independent income, while this was the case for only 1 in every 10 men (ECLAC, 2018f). Gender gaps in labour markets and in access to production, financial and technological resources and to social protection continue to be hallmarks of the countries of the region.

### **2. The sexual division of labour and unjust social organization of care**

A number of countries, including Mexico and Uruguay, have already implemented the agreements of the Regional Gender Agenda, incorporated the right to care into their regulatory frameworks and adopted measures for the social redistribution of caregiving tasks. Data from the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean show that women's total workload is systematically greater than that of men. Women's entry into the labour market has not been matched by a significant increase in the time that men devote to unpaid domestic and care work. In Latin America and the Caribbean, women spend up to one third of their time on unpaid domestic and care work, while men spend one tenth of their time on such work (ECLAC, 2018f).

As the Montevideo Strategy makes clear, the social organization of care continues to be unfair and unbalanced, with heavy implications in terms of the equality gap between men and women, between women of different socioeconomic levels and between countries and territories. Latin American and Caribbean women form part of global care chains. In the coming years, demographic changes in the region and throughout the world will increase the burden of caring for older persons and persons in situations of dependency (ECLAC, 2017a and 2018e).

### **3. Discriminatory, violent and patriarchal cultural patterns and the predominance of a culture of privilege**

The enactment of laws aimed at eradicating violence against women has been a fundamental step forward. However, a resultant reduction in such violence in the region has not been automatic. Gender-based discrimination and violence continues to be a problem that occurs in different spaces and comes in many forms. Not only is it a violation of human rights, but it also affects women's economic and decision-making autonomy. Moreover, available data reveal that once laws have been adopted, the main challenges are access to justice, institutional coordination and ensuring sufficient financing for their effective implementation (ECLAC, 2016).

Thus, although progress has been made in the criminalization of femicide and the increased statistical visibility thereof, it has not been sufficient to eliminate this form of violence. Data from the Observatory show that at least 2,795 women from 23 Latin American and Caribbean countries were victims of femicide in 2017 (ECLAC, 2018h). It is estimated that in the last five years, at least 16,000 women have been murdered in those countries. In most of the cases women have been murdered by their partners or ex-partners. There is an exception in this trend, particularly in countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, which have the highest rates of femicide and where more women are killed outside of the private sphere.

The governments attending the meetings of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean noted the resurgence in discriminatory practices and discourses that restrict the full exercise of women's rights (ECLAC, 2017a).<sup>5</sup> Discrimination is deepened and reinforced by factors such as ethnicity and race, age, socioeconomic status and territory, among others. Efforts must be geared towards eradicating the culture of privilege, as well as promoting and strengthening the culture of rights, non-discrimination and equality.

### **4. Concentration of power and hierarchical relations in the public sphere**

Women's decision-making autonomy means full their participation in the decisions that affect their lives and their communities. Although women's political participation across the region has risen steadily over the past few decades, they hold only 30% of seats in the region's parliaments, which remains far below the target for parity-based democracies. There are significant differences from country to country, however, with extreme underrepresentation in countries such as Haiti (2.5%), Belize (9.4%) and Brazil (10.7%).

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<sup>5</sup> See paragraph 8 of the agreements adopted at the fifty-seventh meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2018b); and paragraph 1 of the agreements adopted at the fifty-fifth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2017f).

As data from the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean show, the participation of women in politics at the local level is below 30%. In 2017, women held 29.5% of council member or councillor positions, while the number of women in executive positions at the local level was much lower, with a mere 14.6% of women elected to mayoral office (ECLAC, 2018f).

Women's minority presence is not limited to the political arena. This limited participation is also noticeable in other spheres of decision-making, such as the social sphere and the economy, either in businesses or trade unions. Women are concentrated in sectors of activity and positions that are generally less respected and lower-paid. In addition, men and women are distributed unequally across hierarchical levels, making it more difficult for women to get ahead in their profession and gain access to more skilled and better-paid jobs (ECLAC, 2016). These gaps in access to power are part of a process of concentration of political and economic power; efforts must therefore be made to move towards the democratization of societies and economies.

### **5. Mutually reinforcing bottlenecks limit the scope of public policy**

To fully understand gender inequality in the region, it is necessary to establish how the four structural challenges overlap and feed into each other. The persistence of discrimination and violence against women affects their ability to generate their own income, start a business, overcome poverty and to achieve professional and personal fulfilment.

The greater burden of unpaid domestic and care work borne by women perpetuates vicious circles of time poverty and income poverty. It is one of the main barriers to women's participation in the political sphere, their entry in the labour market and their ability to obtain more stable, better quality and higher-paid jobs. This not only affects women's career paths, but also results in fragmented and unequal access to social protection in old age (ECLAC, 2016). Moving towards a more equal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work between men and women remains a considerable challenge. Even in countries that have made strides in implementing paternity and parental leave, men rarely take such leave, reinforcing the cultural pattern that care is the sole responsibility of women (Lupica, 2015; Batthyány, Genta and Perrotta, 2015).

Furthermore, an analysis of the gender wage gap in the region shows how patriarchal cultural patterns reinforce socioeconomic and gender inequality. Notwithstanding the efforts to reduce the wage gap that have been made in recent decades, women earn, on average, 16.1% less than men in the same occupations. Paradoxically, the gap is even wider for women who have more years of schooling (ECLAC, 2016).

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the persistently low participation of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) is a cause for concern. Women account for only 34.6% of graduates in these fields.<sup>6</sup> Discriminatory patterns and gender stereotypes continue to influence the tendency to associate women and men with certain careers and occupations. In some countries, the percentage of women pursuing tertiary studies in STEM is falling. This poses a challenge in terms of women's participation in progressive structural change and their adaptation and capacity to respond to future changes in the world of work.

As mentioned previously, gender inequalities overlap with territorial, ethnic-racial and socioeconomic inequalities, among others. Data from four countries of the region (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Guatemala) show that rural women not only spend more time on unpaid work than men, but that

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<sup>6</sup> Simple average for 12 countries in the region, on the basis of the UNESCO database (2018).

their share of that work is also higher compared to men and women living in urban areas (ECLAC, 2016). This indicates that the volume of work and time spent on work are higher in rural areas than in urban areas.

In addition, in six countries in the region (Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), attendance rates in higher education are very low among young Afrodescendent women between the ages of 18 and 24. In Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Panama and Uruguay, Afrodescendent women are the most severely affected by unemployment (ECLAC, 2018c).

This section will address how these structural challenges intersect with and reinforce one another, perpetuating inequality and a lack of autonomy, and how they reduce the scope of gender equality policies in the region.

### **C. ADVANCING TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY AT DIFFERENT SPEEDS**

Progress in the guarantee of women's rights in the region has been uneven, with national characteristics often resulting in differences of pace. Differences are also observed within countries, as some groups of women face multiple forms of discrimination that overlap and are mutually reinforcing.

The region's economic growth is closely linked to the global context, the effects of which vary across the subregions. In South America, for example, there is a strong correlation between the growth rate and commodity price dynamics. In Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean, by contrast, the growth rate is highly dependent on the economic performance of the United States (ECLAC, 2018e).

Country-specific progress with regard to normative frameworks and the institutionalization of mechanisms for the advancement of women and the participation of civil society account for the differences in the pace at which gender equality commitments have been implemented the region. Factors such as social norms, economic and political contexts and vulnerability to external conditions also play a role. A specific example is the Caribbean subregion, where vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and to extreme weather events determines States' priorities for action and affects women's autonomy.

This section will examine the region's heterogeneity and address the particular challenges countries face in guaranteeing the rights of all women and achieving equality.

## **II. CHANGING ECONOMIC SCENARIOS**

In the last few years, significant geopolitical, trade, financial and technological changes occurring on a global scale have had an impact on the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

This chapter will address the main factors that shape new scenarios, such as the macroeconomic environment, trade and financial flows, technological change, demographic shifts and climate change, as well as their implications for gender equality and women's autonomy.

It will also examine how these can either entrench or remove barriers to gender equality and women's autonomy.

## A. GLOBAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

The main variables shaping to the global scenario include: growing global interdependence, the rapid progress of digital technologies, the increase in inequality in several countries, the polarization of the benefits of globalization and wage stagnation at the global level (ECLAC, 2018e).

The financial and trade liberalization policies that have been applied worldwide over the last few decades have prompted the delocalization and fragmentation of production processes and heightened the financialization of economies.<sup>7</sup> As a result, financial and economic volatility, as well as interdependence between countries—and, thus a possibility of systemic risk—continue to rise.

At the same time, the benefits and costs associated with globalization have not been equitably distributed among countries, regions and sectors, or between men and women. It should be noted that the links between gender equality and trade depend, among other things, on how production and export specialization intersect with gender-based segregation in the labour market. In some countries of the region, the export pattern based on natural-resource-intensive sectors has slowed job creation, especially for women in the foreign trade sector (Durán Lima and Castresana, 2016). In other cases, women are employed in the most precarious or least value-added links in global value chains. Low wages have been seen as a “comparative advantage” for establishing some links of in value chains in Latin America and the Caribbean (Giosa Zuazúa and Rodríguez Enríquez, 2010).

There has been a turnaround in the global economy, with similar signs of slow recovery in trade. There has also been an emergence of trade and geopolitical disputes and tensions. The deterioration of the international financial environment is a risk for emerging economies and for Latin America and the Caribbean in particular. Furthermore, slowing growth, net capital outflows and the mounting protectionism facing the region will likely worsen in the next few years (ECLAC, 2018e).

Estimated growth for the region in 2018 stood at 1.2%, a slight slowdown from 1.3% in 2017. There are significant variations in the pace of growth between countries and subregions: while it has weakened in South America (from 0.8% in 2017 to 0.6% in 2018) and in the group formed by Central America, Cuba and Haiti (from 3.4% to 3.2%); it has picked up slightly in Mexico, which registered a rate of 2.2% in 2018, up from 2.1% in 2017. In the Caribbean, the recovery from the natural disasters of 2017 has spurred an uptick, with growth rates increasing from 0.2% in 2017 to 1.9% in 2018. Growth projections for the region in 2019 have been revised downwards from 1.9% to 1.7%, owing primarily to less favourable global conditions (ECLAC, 2018j).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development offers a transformative vision of development, focused on people and the planet, and upholds gender equality as essential for sustainable development. This provides an opportunity for States to agree to undertake concrete action that will enable them to achieve this global commitment.

This section will illustrate how the global context shapes the regional scenario in economic and political terms.

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<sup>7</sup> This refers to the rising importance of financial markets, financial institutions and financial elites in the workings of economies and their institutions of governance, both nationally and internationally (Epstein, 2006, cited in ECLAC, 2018e, p. 14).

## **B. ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL GLOBALIZATION**

In recent years, there have been significant changes in globalization trends. First, global trade in goods has slowly recovered its previous dynamism, although trends point to a slowdown beginning in 2018 (ECLAC, 2018k). Second, the concentration of power and profits generated by this phase of globalization has fuelled discontent and doubts among different actors over the strategy of financial and trade liberalization. In addition, China has become a key international player and is one of the region's most important trading partners. At the same time, this points to a shortening of the global value chains and a fall in foreign direct investment (ECLAC, 2018e).

Countries' international positioning and, more specifically, their trade and investment promotion policies affect gender equality because they have a bearing on labour market conditions, the relative prices of goods, government revenues, access to key public services and the policy space available for regulation in support of women's rights. In this regard, this section will analyse some of the gender implications of trade and financial policies and agreements. Specifically, it will examine the effects of trade-openness and liberalization policies and of reshoring processes on the quantity and quality of female employment in some Latin American and Caribbean countries (for example, in the apparel industry in Central America). It will also analyse some investment promotion and export diversification initiatives in innovative and female-intensive sectors, as well as the barriers to and opportunities for entrepreneurship and the internationalization of women-led enterprises.

Furthermore, the global financial sector is increasingly concentrated, interconnected and detached from the real economy and people's needs. While, on the one hand, there is excess international liquidity, on the other, gaps in the financing of gender equality policies and unequal access to credit for women persist. Moreover, in the absence of gender-sensitive macroeconomic policies, women may end up having to absorb economic shocks during periods of crisis, instability or recession, primarily through the excessive burden of unpaid work they bear (Montaño, 2011; United Nations, 2016). Women can also be disproportionately affected by regressive tax systems, as they are overrepresented among self-employed workers and employees of small and medium-sized enterprises and in poor households.

This section will examine the links between the financialization of economies and the disparities in access to financing that affect women in particular. It will also look at the role of development banks in moving towards access to financing on suitable terms for women, taking into account their diversity.

## **C. THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION**

The pace of technology development has accelerated, with significant effects on economic structures and society and completely transforming production, management and governance systems (ECLAC, 2018e). High-speed networks have facilitated the consolidation of digital platforms, cloud computing, big data analytics and advances in artificial intelligence. The coevolution and confluence of these technologies leads to disruptive changes in business structures, regulatory and governance frameworks and labour markets (Castillo, 2017).

Technological changes present both opportunities and challenges for the closing of existing gaps and recently created ones. This is especially true in Latin America and the Caribbean, where persistent

barriers to the uptake of these innovations mean that new technological platforms are slower to arrive than in other regions.

Although production and business dynamics are still difficult to predict, the digital revolution is certainly transforming consumer lifestyles and business models by creating intelligent products and services that reach a greater number of users faster and at lower costs. This presents an opportunity to provide services to persons to whom they were previously unavailable: for example, it opens the door to more equitable access to financial markets for women. In this regard, it would be possible to promote innovative digital tools that use alternative risk assessment algorithms that take into account gender inequalities and help to reverse them.

The dizzying growth in volume of information generated globally has been successfully managed through the development of algorithms and artificial intelligence. This has changed the way people interact each other, especially in terms of communication and decision-making. This has resulted in the concentration of power in the hands of a few platform companies, posing new challenges in the development of competition regulation policies (ECLAC, 2018e). Algorithm development is an area that will require monitoring and possible regulation to ensure that gender inequalities are not reproduced through the use of gender-biased algorithms. Furthermore, the profusion of information published by users on social media poses a privacy and security challenge. Effective regulation is therefore needed to prevent, among other things, new forms of control of and violence against women.

The Regional Gender Agenda reiterates at length the need to tear down the gender barriers in the region's labour markets. In this regard, these new scenarios call for an analysis of the extent to which technological change will create new opportunities to improve jobs or, conversely, further polarize the world of work by reproducing patterns of segregation of women. It is important to approach the debate from a critical perspective that questions the position of men and women in new labour relations.

First, automation processes raise concerns about possible job displacement that affects more women than men. For example, 21.9% of employed women in the region are concentrated in the commerce sector, primarily as service sector workers or sales workers in shops and markets, where there is a high risk of automation. Similarly, 11.6% of women employed in the manufacturing sector are in positions with a high concentration of routine tasks with low cognitive demand, so the risk of automation and the speed with which it could become a reality are high (ECLAC, 2018i).

Second, the emergence of new types of work is weakening labour relations as flexible models that as yet have not been regulated to guarantee workers' labour rights are being introduced. This undoubtedly presents a challenge to the labour institutions and regulatory frameworks that pre-date this technological revolution and which do not guarantee the right to organize, strike, or bargain collectively, holidays, sick leave, health insurance, maternity protection or unemployment insurance to workers in the gig economy.<sup>8</sup> The prospect of obtaining jobs with more flexible working hours that make it possible to combine income

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<sup>8</sup> The gig economy refers to the practice of using Internet platforms to offer services for specific "gigs" or tasks to consumers. These platforms are characterized by their ability to leverage large amounts of real-time data to efficiently match a large number of suppliers and consumers. Digital platform work typically entails self-contained tasks that can be performed relatively unsupervised, require short time commitments on the worker's side, and are more cost-efficiently performed by a human being than a machine. There are two forms of digital platform work: crowdwork, which works as an online service market where providers do not have to be physically present, and on-demand work via apps, where the service provider must be physically present. See "Preliminary report on the emergence of new business model in the digital economy. Disruptive technology changes and the emergence of new business models and production strategies will impact employment" [online] [http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2018/new\\_business\\_models\\_eclac.pdf](http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2018/new_business_models_eclac.pdf).

generation with other activities, such as vocational training, political participation and care responsibilities can be very attractive —especially for women, who shoulder the greater burden of unpaid work in households. In this sense, without a shift in cultural patterns and in the allocation of domestic and care tasks, what appears to be an opportunity for greater participation of women in employment could instead reinforce traditional gender roles and the unfair social organization of care.

#### **D. DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE**

In recent decades, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have undergone profound demographic changes as a result of lower mortality and higher life expectancy. This transition —which has occurred at varying rates in the different countries— is due to socioeconomic and cultural shifts, improvements in living and working conditions and health care and the increase in urban population (ECLAC, 2018a).

According to ECLAC projections, Latin America’s population will increase from 652 million in 2018 to 718 million and 779 million in 2030 and 2050, respectively (United Nations, 2017).

Lower fertility and population ageing are the main characteristics of the region’s demographic transformation. The high fertility rates of the 1960s (5.5 children per woman) fell to rates below 2.1 later in the century, although the speed of this decline has varied significantly from country to country (ECLAC, 2018a). The change in the age structure is reflected in an increased proportion of older people and a decreased proportion of children. In the region, people aged 60 or over will for the first time outnumber children and adolescents under the age of 15 sometime around 2036, and their numbers will continue to rise until 2080 (United Nations, 2017, cited in ECLAC, 2018a).

These demographic changes portend significant repercussions on the economy in general and on the care economy in particular, on production and reproduction, on the public and private sectors, and mainly on the lives of women, who are the primary providers of care. The expansion of rights and the recognition of new rights-holders will be some of the most significant public policy challenges with this new demographic panorama, forcing the region to devise new responses in the areas of social protection and gender equality.

When addressing the issue of old age, there are no clear answers to the problems of health care and access to care, pensions and social care services. In Latin America and the Caribbean, a large proportion of older people currently have no income of their own or earn too little to ensure protection in the event of a loss or absence of income.

One of the major challenges for 2030 is to include care in comprehensive public policies that are founded on the principles of solidarity, equality and non-discrimination. Although some countries have made progress in building comprehensive care systems, shortcomings persist that limit the capacity of the public system to respond to the emergencies related to an ageing population.

Changes in migration flows in the region have become more pronounced in the last few decades. Gender inequality plays a decisive role in the autonomy of migrant women throughout the migration cycle, because although migration could boost women’s autonomy, it exposes them to greater levels of vulnerability and violence. Despite the fact that the migration of both men and women has historically shaped the population and economies of the region, there remain gaps in the regulatory frameworks that prohibit a comprehensive approach to this issue.

One of the areas addressed in this section is migrant women who find employment in domestic service in destination countries. With no social protection and working conditions that women in other sectors do not endure, they face specific challenges in the exercise of their social, economic and cultural rights (ILO, 2018).

However, the demographic changes taking place in the countries of the region will have an impact on productivity and growth. When the size of the dependent population exceeds the working-age population, there will be a decline in the rate of economic activity. Offsetting this will require bringing more people into the labour market, which represents an opportunity for women of working age to enter the market and thus mitigate a productivity loss.

## **E. CLIMATE CHANGE**

Climate change in Latin America and the Caribbean reflects an asymmetrical situation: the region is responsible for less than 10% of global carbon dioxide emissions; yet it is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change because of its geography, socioeconomic structures and demographics, and because its natural assets are acutely sensitive to climate variability (Bárcena and others, 2017). It is becoming increasingly urgent to address the many challenges that climate change poses to the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, as they reflect the complexity of the interrelationship between the environmental, economic and social dimensions and illustrate clearly that the region's current development pattern is unsustainable.

There is empirical evidence that the effects of climate change vary not only between countries, but also within countries and that they are also present socioeconomic and gender differentials (Dankelman, 2010; Skinner, 2011). Socially assigned and historically unequal gender roles and norms mean that women are more severely affected by climate change. Its consequences are evident in women's productive and reproductive roles in society and tend to exacerbate existing inequalities, such as time-use inequalities, as obtaining the resources to ensure food security for their families becomes more difficult.

As part of the debate on the effects of climate change in the region and the differential impact in relation to gender, this section will examine the uneven consequences of natural disasters, with special emphasis on the Caribbean countries. Available data show that the frequency and intensity of natural disasters have been increasing worldwide. Some of their immediate effects on women include more time poverty, owing to the increase in reproductive and care work (IPCC, 2014); greater economic vulnerability; and, in some cases, a higher incidence of violence against women (IFRC, 2015). There is growing recognition that women must be included in natural disaster responses. For this to become a reality, however, the structural causes of gender inequality must be taken into account in order to avoid the "feminization of responsibility" (Bradshaw, 2015).

Given that the prevailing development pattern in the region goes hand in hand with the negative effects of climate change, Latin America and the Caribbean must not lag behind in the efforts to achieve low-carbon economic development in which there are incentives to invest in new technologies and the modernization of the production structure is strengthened (Rovira, Patiño and Schaper, 2017).

It is essential, therefore, for the policies aimed at promoting sustainable development in the region to be gender-sensitive.

This section will deal with the gender gaps in the labour market, focusing on the situation in small- and medium-sized enterprises and the fields of technology, science and innovation to show how advances in strategies for low-emission economic development can encourage women's participation.

### **III. COMPREHENSIVE POLICY GUIDELINES FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S AUTONOMY IN CHANGING ECONOMIC SCENARIOS**

This chapter aims to provide input in the discussion on moving forward in the implementation of the commitments of the Regional Gender Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the light of ongoing and imminent technological, geopolitical, demographic and climatic changes. It will examine the need to design policies that not only respond to, but also anticipate disruptive societal changes and their impacts on gender inequalities. It will also examine the importance of the political and financial sustainability of progress made in gender equality that may be put at risk by economic cycle changes, changes of government, or the resurgence of discriminatory cultural patterns.

The chapter will also consider public policies from a multiscale perspective, taking into account global asymmetries, the interdependence of countries and the interconnected challenges of sustainable development and gender equality. In addition to advancing public policy proposals, reference will be made to regional and global gender inequalities and the need for coordinated responses and stronger multilateral architecture to overcome the structural challenges of inequality and achieve the autonomy of all women without discrimination.

The policy recommendations will include some of the approaches that guide public policies that have been adopted in the Montevideo Strategy: (i) gender equality; (ii) women's human rights; (iii) intersectionality and interculturality; (iv) parity-based, representative and participatory democracy, and secularism; and (v) sustainable and inclusive development.

In particular, human rights-based policy recommendations will take into account the following elements: the principle of non-discrimination and equality (*de facto* and *de jure*), guaranteeing minimum essential levels, the progressive realization of human rights, the full use of maximum available resources, and the principle of non-regression and access to justice. In addition, special attention will be paid to the diversity of situations in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as to the short- and long-term challenges to achieving progressive structural change with gender equality.

#### **A. MULTIDIMENSIONAL PUBLIC POLICIES**

This section will present guidelines for public policy at various levels designed to advance the achievement of women's autonomy and rights in changing economic scenarios.

The focus will be on the design of policies aimed at guaranteeing women's rights in the light of changes in the macroeconomic environment, the volatility of trade and financial flows, the digital revolution, demographic transformations and climate change.

It will analyse the importance of strengthening the role of States' mechanisms for the advancement of women and institutional architecture for gender equality in order to make a qualitative leap forward in gender

mainstreaming, especially with regard to macroeconomic, labour, social protection and poverty eradication, care and climate change mitigation and adaptation policies. Specifically, it will present policy guidelines for moving towards greater labour participation by women in sectors that are key to structural change and towards more equitable redistribution of care in the context of demographic and technological change.

This section will also highlight the importance of cross-sectoral and inter-agency efforts to deliver a joint response to interconnected challenges. It will explore how production and innovation policies interact with policies on the shared responsibility for care, migration and comprehensive policies for the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women. Lastly, it will identify policies that can achieve the potential complementarities between equality, production efficiency and environmental sustainability (CEPAL, 2018e).

The importance of having information systems that bring to light the complexity of gender inequalities in view of ongoing transformations will also be addressed. In this regard, recommendations will be made for strengthening the production of information from traditional sources (surveys, censuses and administrative registers) as well as from non-traditional sources (big data).

## **B. MULTILATERAL GOVERNANCE AND AN ENABLING INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY**

This section will present guidelines for regional and international policies aimed at creating an enabling environment and generating sufficient resources for achieving women's autonomy and rights in changing economic scenarios.

Since the different trends analysed in the document are transnational in nature, in this section the focus will be on regional and international policies and governance, which are indispensable if the aforementioned trends are to be addressed.

Governments agreed to ensure that the position of Latin American and Caribbean countries in international discussions on macroeconomic policy, and trade, investment and financial agreements, incorporates the commitments of the regional gender agenda and their link with Sustainable Development Goals, and that relevant international norms are consistent with women's human rights (ECLAC, 2017a). Consequently, in the context of the challenges that globalization poses to gender equality, this section will emphasize the need for coherence between trade, financial and investment policies and women's rights.

In the area of technological change, it will explore the asymmetrical dynamics of development and the spread of technological progress and their impacts on structural heterogeneity and inequality (Cimoli and Porcile, 2013). It will also examine Internet governance, the regulation of data use and the prevention of new forms of violence against women and girls. The digital revolution poses additional challenges for the closing of gender gaps in labour markets. This section will include the challenges of regional cooperation in this area as well as some recommendations on progress towards the use of technologies that are "socially appropriate, safe and environmentally sustainable, and help eliminate gender inequality" (ECLAC, 2017a, p. 30).

With regard to demographic changes, this section offers proposals on global care chains and the need for policy coordination among countries of origin, transit and destination with a view to guaranteeing the rights of migrant women. It will also analyse the macroeconomic impact of remittances, as well as the need to move forward in the implementation of measures to guarantee pension portability.

Given that the impacts of climate change transcend borders, gender-sensitive adaptation and mitigation strategies and cooperation between countries will also be analysed.

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