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**REPORT OF THE FIFTY-FIFTH MEETING OF THE PRESIDING OFFICERS
OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN
IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

Santiago, 25-26 May 2017

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place and date of the meeting

1. The Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean held their fifty-fifth meeting at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago, on 25 and 26 May 2017.

Attendance¹

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member countries in their capacity as Presiding Officers: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Suriname and Uruguay.

3. Also attending were representatives of the following member countries of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean: Colombia, France, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Norway and Paraguay.

4. A representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) attended from the United Nations Secretariat.

5. The following specialized agencies of the United Nations were also represented: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

6. Also present at the meeting were representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and International Organization for Migration (IOM).

7. Also present at the meeting were representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations: ParlAmericas and European Union.

8. Representatives of non-governmental organizations and special guests also attended.

¹ See annex 2.

Chair

9. The composition of the Presiding Officers elected at the thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women was as follows:

Chair: Uruguay

Vice-Chairs: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Puerto Rico, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Suriname.

B. AGENDA

10. The Presiding Officers adopted the following agenda:

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Report on the activities carried out by the secretariat since the thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (Montevideo, 25-28 October 2016).
3. Report on the outcome of the first meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development (Mexico City, 26-28 April 2017).
4. Reports by the countries on the application of the Montevideo Strategy for the Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030, with a focus on women's economic autonomy.
5. Presentation of the study by the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, *Gender equality plans in Latin America and the Caribbean: road maps for development*.
6. Report of the working group on the regional fund in support of women's and feminist organizations and movements.
7. Panel discussion on vocational education and training and young women's participation in the labour force.
8. Other matters.
9. Adoption of agreements.

C. PROCEEDINGS

11. At the opening session, statements were made by Raúl García-Buchaca, Deputy Executive Secretary for Management and Programme Analysis of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and Mariella Mazzotti, Director of the National Women's Institute (INMUJERES) of Uruguay, in her capacity as Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

12. The Deputy Executive Secretary for Management and Programme Analysis of ECLAC welcomed the participants and said that in order to achieve a sustainable development agenda it was imperative to place gender equality and women's autonomy and rights at the centre of policies for progressive structural change, and for that reason it was necessary to strengthen linkages between mechanisms for the advancement of women, planning and sectoral ministries, decentralized bodies and civil society. The meeting would include the presentation of recent studies and analyses by the Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC that contributed to the implementation of the Montevideo Strategy and the achievement of the Regional Gender Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. The ensuing discussions and deliberations would help to formulate a coordinated response to the prevailing regional and global context marked by uncertainty, and to redouble efforts to achieve women's autonomy in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as the fulfilment of their rights.

13. The Director of the National Women's Institute (INMUJERES) of Uruguay spoke of the climate of uncertainty in Latin American democracies, owing to political instability and economic stagnation or recession. She said that there could be no sustainable development without democracy and neither would be possible without the active participation of women. Moreover, the process of advancement in gender equality should be integrated into the development plans of the region's countries. The second session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean would be held in Montevideo in 2017, and the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean should prepare a proposal incorporating challenges and progress into the themes addressed at that Conference, with a view to avoiding overlap. In Latin America and the Caribbean, inequality and the violation of rights affected women and girls in particular. The juvenilization and feminization of poverty were intertwined, and had been studied by the Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC.

14. In her capacity as Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Director of the National Women's Institute (INMUJERES) of Uruguay submitted the provisional agenda for consideration by the Presiding Officers, who adopted it with one change relating to the order of treatment of points 6 and 7.

Report on the activities carried out by the secretariat since the thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (Montevideo, 25-28 October 2016) (agenda item 2)

15. The Chief of the Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC reported on the activities carried out since the thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean held in Montevideo in October 2016. She spoke of the work done with a view to mainstreaming the gender perspective in the Sustainable Development Goals and applying the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030. She also spoke of statistical time-use data processing at the regional level and the technical assistance provided to the region's countries in that area. She mentioned research and action priorities in vocational education and training, economic autonomy, urban care policies and pension system reform in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean was in the process of updating its

indicators and repository of laws. In addition, the Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC continued to provide distance training and to strengthen gender mainstreaming in ECLAC and interinstitutional work with other international bodies.

16. Next, the representative of Mexico, in her capacity as Vice-Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, spoke of the progress made by the working group on gender statistics in the framework of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC. She highlighted the opportunity provided by the Regional Gender Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for generating and integrating gender statistics and including them in each country's statistical development plans and programmes, given the convergence of both agendas facilitated by the alignment of the Montevideo Strategy with the Sustainable Development Goals. She mentioned the advantages of developing indicators that reflected the complementarity of the Population and Development Agenda and the Regional Gender Agenda in order to make more rapid and solid progress towards fulfilling women's and girls' rights. Lastly, she underscored the importance of strengthening regional and triangular cooperation with a view to standardizing data production in order to formulate more focused, efficient and effective public policies for the advancement of women.

17. Next, the Economic Affairs Officer of the Sustainable Development and Human Settlements Division of ECLAC presented the main findings in that division's document on mainstreaming the gender perspective in public climate-change-response policies in Latin America. He spoke of the incorporation of the gender perspective into sectoral climate-change-response policies and into intersectoral initiatives in five of the region's countries. He underscored the importance of continuing to build knowledge and allocate resources to strengthen the gender perspective in climate change response strategies.

Report on the outcome of the first meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development (Mexico City, 26-28 April 2017) (agenda item 3)

18. The Officer-in-Charge of the Office of the Secretary of the Commission reported on the outcome of the first meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development held in Mexico City, from 26 to 28 April 2017. The meeting promoted opportunities for regional cooperation and peer learning, and was very well attended: more than 700 participants, delegates from 31 countries and numerous representatives of civil society and the academic and private sectors, in addition to intergovernmental and United Nations bodies. At the meeting, the chairs of the subsidiary bodies of ECLAC and of other intergovernmental meetings discussed their contributions to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and potential synergies and complementarities.

19. Next, he referred to the *Annual report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean*² presented by the Executive Secretary of ECLAC. The document contained an analysis of the region's existing institutions for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and of the institutional architecture for the measurement and follow-up of the Agenda, as well as an assessment of national statistical capacity for the production of regional Sustainable Development Goal indicators.

20. Lastly, he spoke of the conclusions and recommendations agreed on at the intergovernmental level, in which countries underscored that gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls would make a crucial contribution to the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, and that the protection and full realization of their human rights were essential to inclusive and equitable long-term economic growth and sustainable development, and for that reason recommended further integration of the gender perspective into national sustainable development policies and strategies.

² LC/L.4268(FDS.1/3)/Rev.1.

21. The representative of Costa Rica, in her capacity as Vice-Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women, said that the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development represented an opportunity to influence all the Sustainable Development Goals through the Regional Gender Agenda. She highlighted the importance of considering in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development the international and regional context marked by economic slowdown, gaps in labour and trade performances owing to financial globalization, climate change, migration-related conflict, violence (particularly against women), and the advance of a conservative agenda that posed new risks of setbacks. Public policy challenges included the need for the design of these policies on the basis of an intersectional and gender-based approach, the allocation of sufficient budgetary resources and the strengthening of partnerships with different State actors and with civil society and private sector entities.

Reports by the countries on the application of the Montevideo Strategy for the Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030, with a focus on women's economic autonomy (agenda item 4)

22. The representative of Argentina underscored the incorporation of gender policies into government targets set in 2016, which were linked to Sustainable Development Goals and which included a cross-cutting approach to gender equality. She highlighted the budget increase for the National Women's Council of Argentina and said that the budget included funds for the implementation of the National Plan of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate Violence against Women (2017-2019). She also spoke of gender equality entities in the national executive, legislative and judicial branches as well as at the local level. Lastly, she mentioned the joint work carried out with the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) to strengthen the national statistics system with a gender perspective and the relaunch of the single register for cases of violence against women.

23. The representative of Colombia said that the Montevideo Strategy had been disseminated in interinstitutional spaces and that under the coordination of the High Presidential Advisory Office for Women's Equality and the Ministry of Labour, progress had been made in the formulation and implementation of measures relating to women's economic autonomy. She highlighted the creation of the Gender Subcommission of the Permanent Commission on Wage and Labour Policies, which included trade associations, unions and the national government, and the training of a large number of women in non-traditional skills through the Comprehensive Road map Programme of Rural and Urban Employment for Victims of the Armed Conflict. Lastly, she said that those actions were coordinated with the 2030 Agenda in the framework of the High Level Interinstitutional Commission for the Preparation and Effective Implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, and that the National Council on Economic and Social Planning (CONPES) intended to adopt a document establishing national goals and indicators for implementation by the government.

24. The representative of Costa Rica spoke of the progress made in the National Policy for Gender Equality and Equity 2007-2017, which aimed to address the Montevideo Strategy's structural challenges, and the realization of a national time-use survey in 2017. She also mentioned the incorporation of the gender perspective into rural territorial development, science and technology curricula, and work done with the Ministry of the Environment and Energy. With respect to the normative framework, she spoke of the preparation of a national standard on therapeutic abortion and the incorporation of sexual and reproductive health into the corresponding component of the national standard for comprehensive adolescent health care. Lastly, she listed three central challenges: interinstitutional coordination, impact measurement and assessment, and the incorporation of the human rights perspective into non-conventional areas.

25. The representative of El Salvador said that the National Plan for Equality 2016-2020 was linked to the Sustainable Development Goals and the national Five-year Development Plan 2014-2019. The adaptation of the Montevideo Strategy included the following cross-cutting guidelines as priorities: the harmonization of standards, the planning system for policies, budgets and public spending with a gender perspective, the institutional culture, the eradication of sexism in communications and civil servant training. She highlighted the creation of gender institutions in different State sectors, the increase in care units for victims of violence and the training of women leaders to carry out social audits. She also spoke of the collaboration with ECLAC and the Governments of Mexico and Uruguay in the preparation of a policy on social responsibility of care.

26. The representative of Mexico first reflected on the challenge posed by the influence of conservative groups in public institutions and political parties and urged the joining of forces to protect the progress made thus far in gender equality and the guarantee of rights. Next, she spoke of the dissemination of the Montevideo Strategy in executive, legislative and judicial institutions and at different levels of government. She described the stages of implementation of the Montevideo Strategy, which included evaluation, identification of activities under the responsibility of the institutions involved, requests for information from the different institutions, follow-up of activities and preparation of a progress report that would be used for planning and budgeting for 2018. She said the 2018 budget would include financing of the Sustainable Development Goals and that work had been done with technical staff and policy decision makers on mainstreaming the gender perspective. She spoke of the Montevideo Strategy measures being addressed in the National Programme for Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination against Women (PROIGUALDAD) 2013-2018³ and proposed that the Presiding Officers create a group to operationalize these measures which should be carried out in coordination with other countries and with ECLAC support.

27. The representative of Chile spoke of the hierarchization of institutions involved in the creation of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Gender Equity. She highlighted the regulatory progress relating to women's economic autonomy and decision-making and the deliberations over the bill on women's right to a life free of violence and the decriminalization of abortion in three types of cases. Lastly, she mentioned the preparation of the National Gender Equality Plan 2018-2030 in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. She spoke of the plan's participatory, transformative and mobilizing nature, and its aim to coordinate public policies with a view to overcoming inequality gaps facing women in their diversity. She mentioned the plan's four thematic areas and acknowledged the support of ECLAC in designing its methodology.

28. The representative of Panama spoke of the participation of the National Women's Institute (INAMU) in the preparation of Sustainable Development Goal indicators from a gender perspective. The ECLAC classification tool for Sustainable Development Goal targets —explicit, implicit and those creating the conditions for gender equality and women's rights— had helped to guide the process. She mentioned changes in normative frameworks and the passing of laws that favoured efficiency in the institutions responsible for achieving gender equality and guaranteeing women's rights. She underscored the growing presence of INAMU in the country and the increase in budget and in qualified personnel to care for women who were victims of gender-based violence. Lastly, she spoke of an agreement with the Government of Mexico to create capacity with a view to producing a time-use survey and to improving the quality of statistical data.

³ In this respect, in Mexico approximately 51% of the Montevideo Strategy measures were being addressed by PROIGUALDAD; 11% were being addressed by other programmes or activities; 18% had yet to be tackled; and 20% were being approached jointly with ECLAC.

29. The representative of the Dominican Republic highlighted the importance of mainstreaming the gender perspective in the implementation of the 2030 National Development Strategy. She acknowledged the guidance provided to the Budget Department (DIGEPRES) to ensure that budget reform would include key gender-sensitive planning and budgetary instruments. She announced an activity to launch Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) in the framework of the Montevideo Strategy and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women for which the technical support from ECLAC was requested. She highlighted the number of gender-equality bureaus already in central government and now also in local government, training for civil servants on gender-sensitive budgets and the creation of the School for Equality. She mentioned the preliminary approval of the comprehensive law on domestic and gender-based violence and the efforts to categorize femicide and to decriminalize abortion in three types of cases as part of penal code reform. With respect to information and monitoring systems, she said that the National Gender Equality and Equity Plan 2007-2017 was being evaluated with a view to planning a third stage and implementation measures for the national Equality Policies Observatory; that process was expected to involve the collaboration and experience of the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean.

30. The representative of Suriname spoke of the preparation of the National Gender Policy 2017-2021 in collaboration with government actors and non-governmental organizations. She added that the five critical policy areas identified were: education and training; labour, income and poverty alleviation; violence; health; and control and decision-making. She also highlighted the institutional strengthening of the Bureau for Gender Affairs through training and the incorporation of more human resources. She mentioned the “Train the trainers in gender” project for government officials and the incorporation of gender modules into civil servant courses. In collaboration with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and UN-WOMEN, the CARICOM Gender Equality Indicators (GEI) model have been implemented with the aim of achieving gender equality in the CARICOM region and contributing to the formulation of national gender-sensitive policies and programmes. Five domains had been identified for the development of indicators: economic activity, education, health, public participation and human rights. Lastly, she highlighted implementation challenges including: insufficient support for gender mainstreaming by the State, lack of data disaggregated by gender and scarce financial resources.

31. The representative of Uruguay spoke of the actions relating to the dissemination of the Montevideo Strategy, such as its presentation to the authorities, civil society representatives and the media, and to the National Gender Council. She stressed that with a view to facilitating the implementation of the Montevideo Strategy, the National Gender Council would design a national equality strategy. A working group for participatory and interinstitutional preparation of the national strategy had been formed for that purpose. There had also been regulatory progress such as preliminary approval of the legal definition of femicide in Parliament and the presentation of the comprehensive bill on gender-based violence. She also spoke of the creation of the 2016-2019 Action Plan for a Life Free of Gender Violence and the strengthening of the interinstitutional gender-based violence response system. Lastly, in order to promote the effective implementation of the law on pregnancy termination, the Ministry of Public Health developed a technical guide for voluntary termination of pregnancy.

32. The representative of Honduras submitted the national report to the Presiding Officers so that it would be made available online.

33. The representative of Brazil briefly described the national regulatory framework for gender equality and mentioned the adoption of Law No. 13434 of 2017, which prohibited the use of handcuffs on pregnant prisoners during antenatal and puerperal medical and hospital care. She referred to the institutions responsible for gender policies at the national, State, district and municipal levels and drew

attention to the establishment of women's care centres in border regions, as well as the opening of a facility for Brazilian women in the Brazilian Consulate in Boston, United States. With respect to strengthening capacity, she mentioned different awareness-raising activities and the revival of the gender committees in the different ministries, as well as the building of a network of public and private institutions known as Red Brasil Mujer, with the aim of working in an integrated manner and optimizing time and resources. Next, she underscored the mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and accountability of the national Gender Equality Observatory, the National Plan of Policies for Women, the National Public Safety Plan (which included a pillar for combating femicide and violence against women) and the Technical Chamber on Violence against Women.

34. The representative of Cuba spoke of the application and processing of data from an equality survey which included one module on violence and another on time-use and its importance in decision-making. She underscored regulatory progress in services, leave and tax deductions that promoted shared responsibility between men and women in care work and better integration of women into the labour market. She also spoke of awareness-raising campaigns targeting the police force, judiciary and public prosecutors with a view to eliminating gender discrimination, and the joint work carried out with the Ministry of Agriculture to promote economic opportunities for rural women, and capacity-building programmes for women in new forms of management being implemented under the updating of the economic model. Lastly, she stressed that the implementation of the Montevideo Strategy required the coherent incorporation of other commitments to promote transformative action by 2030.

35. The representative of Paraguay reported on the regulatory progress made on the rights of rural women, support for breastfeeding women, and comprehensive protection of women from violence. She said that the incorporation of the gender perspective into the 2030 National Development Plan had helped to build gender targets and indicators and to strengthen institutional coordination mechanisms. Technical gender bureaus had been set up to address national planning, violence, the fight against human trafficking, health, agriculture and care policies. She welcomed countries' reflections on the implementation of equality plans and said that Paraguay was developing its fourth equality plan. Lastly, she invited those present to participate in the second Regional Conference on Rural Women of Latin America and the Caribbean to be held in Asunción, from 28 to 29 September 2017.

36. The Chair of the Presiding Officers underscored four elements: the importance of developing indicators on the structural challenges of gender equality, the need to define a strategy in response to the conservative positions linked to the "gender ideology", the importance of strengthening partnerships and negotiating capacity for mechanisms for the advancement of women, and lastly, the need to encourage coordinated measures as a region and to foster technical cooperation to implement them.

37. The representative of the Dominican Republic requested that the meeting agreements include the commitment to incorporate the Montevideo Strategy into the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. She also proposed establishing targets, indicators and an implementation schedule for the different State entities and branches, and called for evaluations to measure medium- and long-term impacts.

Presentation of the study by the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, *Gender equality plans in Latin America and the Caribbean: road maps for development* (agenda item 5)

38. The coordinator of the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean presented the study *Gender equality plans in Latin America and the Caribbean: road maps for development*, which reviewed gender equality plans and analysed the incorporation of gender equality into development strategies and the visibility of this theme in the central government budgets of Latin American

and Caribbean countries. She said that the analysis helped to identify the conceptual approaches of those plans, the criteria that contributed to gender mainstreaming and to innovation in public management and the responsibilities of the different State actors. Lastly, she said that the study offered information for mechanisms for the advancement of women with a view to strengthening interinstitutional coordination in the development of future gender planning instruments.

39. In the ensuing discussion, the representatives of the Governments of Chile, Mexico and Panama said that it was important for the plans to have specific targets and indicators that would allow monitoring and evaluation of progress. The representatives of Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Uruguay reflected on the need to move forward in the development of qualitative indicators that could take into account the new expressions of gender violence, their manifestation in the public and private spheres, and their links to phenomena such as organized crime, as well as encourage new approaches that would allow a structural response to these problems.

40. Several country representatives highlighted the central role of intersectoral work and of the continuation of efforts to integrate gender equality plans into national development plans. The representative of Cuba mentioned the National Action Plan for Follow-up of the Beijing Conference, which had helped to improve women's situation, while the representative of Mexico suggested an analysis of equality plans at the subnational level. The representative of Chile spoke of the importance of incorporating the broader concept of work agreed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) into the next census rounds in order to shed light on unpaid care work done by women in their households and their contribution to the economy and development.

41. In conclusion, the Chief of the Division for Gender Affairs reaffirmed the importance of accompanying equality plans with starting-point indicators that would help to measure the weakening of the structural challenges of gender inequality, and of fostering the coordination of equality plans with sustainable development plans in the framework of the 2030 Agenda.

Report of the working group on the regional fund in support of women's and feminist organizations and movements (agenda item 6)

42. The Director of the National Women's Institute of Uruguay, in her capacity as Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, recalled that at the twelfth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean held in Santo Domingo in 2013, the governments of Latin American and Caribbean countries had expressed their willingness to study the possibility of creating a regional fund for gender equality and intercultural dialogue. Subsequently, in paragraph 10 of resolution 6(XIII) adopted by the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean at its thirteenth session, the countries had endorsed that commitment. The Chair also said that in the framework of the thirteenth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, the first meeting of the working group on the regional fund in support of women's and feminist organizations had been held, and was attended by several ministers and representatives of mechanisms for the advancement of women. On that occasion, participants had examined the background, limitations and opportunities of international institutions in the region, and the authorities in attendance had reaffirmed the willingness of their countries to operate that fund and allow other countries to participate in the working group.

43. She also said that at the second meeting of the working group, held in March 2017 in the framework of the sixty-first session of the Commission of the Status of Women, it had been agreed to propose to the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean at their

fifty-fifth meeting that the fund be regional in scope (support subregional and, possibly, bi-national projects) and administered by the governments, that an ad hoc committee with decision-making powers be created and include representatives of women's and feminist organizations, and that it would support projects relating to the Regional Gender Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. She also spoke of the organization of an administrative and financial structure with the possibility of obtaining support from UN-Women and strategies for promoting financing of the fund.

44. Next, the representative of UN-Women made a brief presentation of the administration models of the funds managed by that entity and the pillars and criteria with which they worked, and reiterated the agency's willingness to participate in the administration of the future regional fund in support of women's and feminist organizations and movements.

45. In the ensuing discussion, the representatives determined that the initiative provided an opportunity in light of the financing problems facing women's and feminist organizations and movements, and that it would strengthen them. The country representatives stressed the need for defined selection, participation and inclusion criteria, efficiency and transparency. They raised questions relating to the functioning of the fund in terms of transfer mechanisms, procedures, financial sources and strategies and the participation of grass-roots and local organizations, universities and international cooperation agencies. El Salvador accepted the proposal of the Chair of the Presiding Officers to join the working group. The representative of Mexico offered to prepare a draft document on the functioning of the fund that would be disseminated to the countries and to civil society organizations so that they could provide comments, with the aim of having a working document to discuss at the next meeting of the Presiding Officers. The representative of the civil society organization *Articulación Feminista Marcosur (AFM)* reiterated the importance of financing for feminist and women's organizations and suggested that the fund be autonomous, with equal participation by feminist and women's organizations and governments.

46. Lastly, taking into account the different comments, the Chair of the Presiding Officers proposed as a road map the preparation of a preliminary document by the Government of Mexico, the organization of virtual meetings between working group countries and representatives of women's and feminist organizations, and their inclusion in the agenda of the fifty-sixth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Panel discussion on vocational education and training and young women's participation in the labour force (agenda item 7)

47. The panel discussion was moderated by Janet Camilo, Minister for Women's Affairs of the Dominican Republic. Participants included Beate Stirø, Ambassador of Norway in Chile; Leandro Sepúlveda, researcher at Universidad Alberto Hurtado of Chile and ECLAC consultant; Cristina Bloj, researcher at Universidad Nacional de Rosario of Argentina and ECLAC consultant; Ana Buquet, Director of the Centre for Gender Research and Studies at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and ECLAC consultant; Marcela Arellano, Executive Secretary of the Vocational Education Department of the Ministry of Education of Chile; and Lidia Arthur Brito, Director of the UNESCO Regional Office for Science for Latin America and the Caribbean.

48. The Ambassador of Norway in Chile underscored women's participation in the labour market as a key component of economic and social development. She said that vocational education and training facilitated equality, given the value placed on technical qualifications in the labour market. She described how the Norwegian model for vocational education and training promoted synergies between the education and labour sectors and had produced good outcomes in terms of academic performance and

participation in the labour market. She acknowledged gender segmentation in the labour market and reaffirmed the potential of vocational education and training to achieve gender equality, improve participation in the labour market and narrow the wage gap. Lastly, she highlighted the importance of developing education plans that took into account changes in the labour market in the coming years.

49. The researcher at Universidad Alberto Hurtado of Chile described the state of vocational education and training in the region and stressed the heterogeneous nature of systems and the dispersion of statistical data that made comparisons difficult. He said that in the vocational education and training model there was tension between an approach defined by production sector demand and a socioeducational approach based on the subject's capacity and needs. He stressed the importance of discussing the meaning of vocational education and training and how it was addressed in the region, taking into account the socioeconomic make-up of the student body. He spoke of gender segregation in the development of specialties and of the need for policies that took into account greater participation of women in degree programmes normally dominated by men, training in gender equality for educators, career counselling and the link between academic and production and labour actors.

50. The researcher at Universidad Nacional de Rosario of Argentina presented a case study on women's educational and professional trajectories which revealed that gender bias was present in career segregation, the division of tasks on the basis of "natural" abilities, hiring for internships, visual media and training programme content. The study showed greater participation by men at all levels: as students, teachers and managers. Public policy recommendations included the development of hard and soft skills, the narrowing of the gap between training and employment, the implementation of a scholarship system for the entire formative period and an evaluation system. Measures aimed at increasing women's participation (especially facilitating access for low-income women) and at promoting a law reconciling unpaid and paid work were also recommended.

51. The Director of the Centre for Gender Research and Studies at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) presented the outcomes of a case study carried out in Mexico. She described vocational education and training as a method that had been discredited and ignored by equality policies. She said that women's careers were hindered by bias on the basis of their physical strength, the influence of their family environment on their decisions and a perception of dissatisfaction and lack of independent choice. She stressed the lack of recognition of gender discrimination by women and the need to address the role played by families. She recommended focusing public policies on incorporating gender content into programmes, awareness-raising and agreements with the production sector to foster women's experience and participation in the labour market.

52. The representative of the Ministry of Education in Chile focused on education reform in her country and the opportunity that it provided to consider vocational education and training and the challenges of inclusion raised by the transformation of the labour market owing to technology. She acknowledged career segregation based on gender, the disconnect between education and employment and the resistance of some business sectors to employing women. She said that education policy should place value in technical careers, delve into the factors that influenced career choices and consider care work when developing education schedules and programmes.

53. The Director of the UNESCO Regional Office for Science for Latin America and the Caribbean suggested focusing on the compatibility of the vocational education and training system at the intermediate and higher levels in order to facilitate mobility. She reflected on the importance of providing education that would help to develop ventures and establish constant feedback with businesses, and recommended that gender bias in the family environment be examined.

Closing session

54. After the Director of the National Women's Institute of Uruguay, in her capacity as Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, thanked the participants, the Chief of the Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC said that the meeting had revealed the region's preparation for the challenges of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Regional Gender Agenda. The Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030 represented a milestone of the Regional Gender Agenda, and was not a goal, but a political and technical instrument to weaken structural challenges: the region's contribution to global processes. The real objectives were equality policies, fulfillment of women's rights and the safeguarding of their autonomy.

55. The Chief of the Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC also underscored the importance of participation, one of the implementation pillars of the Montevideo Strategy, not just in relation to the development and design of policies or follow-up by the citizenry of the commitments made by governments, but also as a key element to enrich democracy and ensure that no one was left behind. The future regional fund in support of women's and feminist organizations and movements would foster the participation of civil society. Lastly, she said that it was crucial to keep up with social phenomena, such as the rapid development of new technologies, to ensure that there were no lost opportunities to influence and help shape them—encouraging training and creating employment opportunities for young women—and thus secure women's rights and autonomy.

Annex 1

AGREEMENTS

At their fifty-fifth meeting, the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean agreed to:

1. *Ensure* the exercise of women's rights and their autonomy in the current context marked by the economic slowdown, the effects of climate change, the fragility of some democracies and the resurgence of conservative and fundamentalist positions that amount to a threat of possible backsliding;
2. *Strengthen* gender mainstreaming strategies by means of partnership building, coordination and negotiation to ensure that gender equality policies are policies of State;
3. *Step up* efforts to strengthen the capacities of machineries for the advancement of women as focal points for and coordinators with different governmental bodies, with a view to designing equality policies and mainstreaming gender in planning and budgeting at the national, subnational and local levels;
4. *Commend* the efforts made by the countries of the region to apply the Montevideo Strategy for the Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030 through its implementation pillars and congratulate those that, at this meeting, have voluntarily reported on their progress in the implementation and adaptation of the Strategy to their national situation;
5. *Increase* the dissemination of measures set forth in the Montevideo Strategy among the various State bodies to ensure their full engagement in and commitment to its implementation pillars;
6. *Follow up* on the implementation of the Montevideo Strategy at all levels and in all sectors of public policy in accordance with national priorities, particularly gender equality and sustainable development plans, and ensure that they have funding;
7. *Reaffirm* the commitment to mainstream the gender perspective and women's autonomy and rights, in line with the Regional Gender Agenda and the Montevideo Strategy, into all the Sustainable Development Goals, their targets, indicators and means of implementation, in order to take advantage of this window of opportunity for institutional strengthening of machineries for the advancement of women;
8. *Request* the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to provide technical support for progress in the implementation of the measures set forth in the Montevideo Strategy identified as priorities by each country, and to continue developing indicators for analysing and designing strategies to resolve the structural bottlenecks of gender inequality; to foster knowledge transfer and experience-sharing between countries; and to carry out South-South cooperation activities for the application of the Montevideo Strategy;
9. *Strengthen* the coordinated work between the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean and other subsidiary bodies of the Commission, in particular the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Statistical Conference of the Americas, with a view to comprehensively tackling the various expressions of gender inequality and coordinating social, economic and population policies;

10. *Thank* the secretariat for its report on the activities carried out since the thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, in particular with regard to knowledge management, technical assistance for countries and efforts to disseminate and implement the Montevideo Strategy, and urge it to continue with this line of work in coordination with machineries for the advancement of women;

11. *Welcome* the study by the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean entitled *Gender equality plans in Latin America and the Caribbean: road maps for development*,¹ which was prepared by the Division for Gender Affairs of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, with the support of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, and constitutes an input for reflection by machineries for the advancement of women, and continue to support the process of updating the Observatory;

12. *Reiterate* their commitment to designing and implementing gender plans and policies that are coordinated with national sustainable development strategies and have targets, indicators and adequate budgets;

13. *Urge* United Nations bodies and international cooperation agencies to contribute to the sustainability of the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, in keeping with agreement 3 of the Quito Consensus of 2007;

14. *Thank* the Division for Gender Affairs of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean for organizing, with the support of the Government of Norway, the panel discussion on vocational education and training and young women's participation in the labour force, and for the studies presented;

15. *Reaffirm* the importance of taking active steps to eliminate gender bias in education, curricula and vocational education and training systems and of promoting public-private intersectoral dialogues (among the State, trade unions, social organizations and businesses) to promote young women's incorporation into the labour force in good-quality jobs in fields from which they are currently excluded;

16. *Welcome* the *Report by the secretariat on the regional fund in support of women's and feminist organizations and movements*² and the incorporation of the Government of El Salvador into the respective working group, and include women's and feminist organizations and movements in the working group;

17. *Also welcome* the road map proposed by the working group on the regional fund in support of women's and feminist organizations and movements, which includes the preparation of a preliminary document by the Government of Mexico, the organization of online meetings between the countries of the working group and women's and feminist organizations, and its inclusion on the agenda for the fifty-sixth meeting of the Presiding Officers;

18. *Invite* the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women to review its proposal in the light of the preliminary document on the regional fund in support of women's and feminist organizations and movements to be prepared by the Government of Mexico, and extend that invitation to other international organizations with experience of fund management;

¹ LC/PUB.2017/1-P.

² LC/MDM.55/3.

19. *Recognize* the multiple manifestations of gender violence and their serious consequences for women and society, and agree to redouble efforts to adjust public policy interventions to prevent, deal with and combat this violence effectively;

20. *Urge* national statistical offices to include in their next census round the broader concept of work agreed upon at the nineteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians of the International Labour Organization (2013), in order to account for both employment and unpaid household work;

21. *Welcome* the offer by the Government of Cuba to host the fifty-sixth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, at which the fortieth anniversary of the Regional Conference will be celebrated, in Havana in the second half of 2017.

Annex 2

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**A. Estados miembros de la Comisión
States members of the Commission****ARGENTINA**Representante/Representative:

- Silvia Lommi, Subsecretaria, Unidad de Coordinación Nacional para la Prevención, Asistencia y Erradicación de la Violencia contra las Mujeres, email: slommi@cnm.gob.ar

Miembro de la delegación/Delegation member:

- Romina Iglesia, Primera Secretaria, Embajada de la República Argentina en Chile, email: iir@mrecic.gov.ar

BRASIL/BRAZILRepresentante/Representative:

- Ester de Paula de Araujo, Coordenadora Geral do Conselho Nacional da Mulher (CNDM), Secretaria Especial da Mulher, Governo Federal, email: fatima.pelaes@spm.gov.br

Miembro de la delegación/Delegation member:

- Cristiano Rabelo, Primer Secretario, Embajada del Brasil en Santiago, email: cristiano.rabelo@itamaraty.gov.br

CHILERepresentante/Representative:

- Claudia Pascual Grau, Ministra, Ministerio de la Mujer y la Equidad de Género, email: cpascual@minmujeryeg.gob.cl

Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

- Marcela Arellano, Secretaria Ejecutiva, Secretaría de Educación Técnico Profesional del Ministerio de Educación, email: marcela.arellano@mineduc.cl
- Catalina Lagos, Jefa, Departamento de Relaciones Internacionales, Ministerio de la Mujer y la Equidad de Género, email: clagos@minmujeryeg.gob.cl
- Ana María Araneda Caamaño, Profesional del Departamento de Comunicaciones, Ministerio de la Mujer y la Equidad de Género, email: aaraneda@minmujeryeg.gob.cl

COLOMBIARepresentante/Representative:

- Adriana Lemos Pérez, Consejera, Embajada de Colombia en Chile, email: adriana.lemos@cancilleria.gov.co

COSTA RICA

Representante/Representative:

- Alejandra Mora Mora, Ministra de la Condición de la Mujer, Presidenta Ejecutiva, Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres (INAMU), email: amora@inamu.go.cr, dzavala@inamu.go.cr

Miembro de la delegación/Delegation member:

- Ligia Martín Salazar, Embajada de Costa Rica en Chile, email: martin.ligia@gmail.com

CUBA

Representante/Representative:

- Teresa Amarelle Boue, Secretaria General, Federación de Mujeres Cubanas, email: presidenciafmc@enet.cu, fmc7@enet.cu

Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

- Yanira Kuper, Miembro de la Secretaría Nacional, Federación de Mujeres Cubanas, Relaciones Internacionales, email: rriifmc@enet.cu
- Adolfo Curbelo, Embajador de Cuba en Chile, email: emcuchil@embacuba.cl
- Sergio Espinosa, Embajada de Cuba en Chile, email: emcuchil@embacuba.cl

ECUADOR

Representante/Representative:

- Oscar Izquierdo Arboleda, Ministro, Embajada del Ecuador en Chile, email: oscar.izquierdo@rogers.com

EL SALVADOR

Representante/Representative:

- Yanira Arqueta, Directora Ejecutiva, Instituto Salvadoreño de las Mujeres (ISDEMU), email: y.argueta@isdemu.gob.sv

Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

- Víctor Manuel Valle, Embajador de El Salvador en Chile, email: vmvalle@rree.gob.sv
- Carla Arias, Embajada de El Salvador en Chile, email: ctarias@rree.gov.sv

FRANCIA/FRANCE

Representante/Representative:

- Kevin Beauvilain, Chargé de Coopération Technique, Ambassade de France au Chili, email: beauvilain.k@gmail.com

GUATEMALA

Miembro de la delegación/Delegation member:

- María Luz Enríquez, Primera Secretaria y Cónsul, Embajada de Guatemala en Chile, email: mdezyriek@mimex.gob.gt

HONDURAS

Representante/Representative:

- María Antonieta Navarro, Embajadora, Embajada de Honduras en Chile, email: embahon@embajadadehonduras.cl

Miembro de la delegación/Delegation member:

- Carmen María Contreras, Segunda Secretaria, Embajada de Honduras en Chile, email: embahon@embajadadehonduras.cl

MÉXICO/MEXICO

Representante/Representative:

- María Marcela Eternod Arámburu, Secretaria Ejecutiva, Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres (INMUJERES), email: mmeternod@inmujeres.gob.mx

Miembro de la delegación/Delegation member:

- Flor de Lis Vásquez Muñoz, Directora General Adjunta de Asuntos Internacionales, Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres (INMUJERES), email: flvasquez@inmujeres.gob.mx

NICARAGUA

Representante/Representative:

- María Luisa Robleto, Embajadora de Nicaragua en Chile, email: embajadoranic2@gmail.com

Miembro de la delegación/Delegation member:

- Lylliam Méndez, Cónsul de Nicaragua en Chile, email: embanic2@gmail.com

NORUEGA/NORWAY

Representante/Representative:

- Beate Stirø, Embajadora de Noruega en Chile, email: emb.santiago@mfa.no

PANAMÁ/PANAMA

Representante/Representative:

- Nidia Martínez Torres, Asesora, Instituto Nacional de la Mujer (INAMU), email: nidiapazmartinez@gmail.com

Miembro de la delegación/Delegation member:

- Ana Teresa Ávila, Asesora, Instituto Nacional de la Mujer (INAMU), email: anteravi@gmail.com

PARAGUAY

Representante/Representative:

- Claudia Beatriz García Samaniego, Viceministra de Igualdad y No Discriminación, Ministerio de la Mujer, email: cgarcia@mujer.gov.py

REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA/DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Representante/Representative:

- Janet Camilo, Ministra de la Mujer, email: janet.camilo@mmujer.gob.do

Miembro de la delegación/Delegation member:

- Yngrid Alcántara, Ministerio de la Mujer, email: yngridalcantara@yahoo.com

SURINAME

Representante/Representative:

- Mireille Ngadimin, Head Staff Officer, Bureau of Gender Affairs, email: m.ngadimin@yahoo.com

Miembro de la delegación/Delegation member:

- Michele Jules, Head Staff Officer, Ministry of Home Affairs, Department of Population Policy, email: michele.s.jules@gmail.com

URUGUAY

Miembro de la delegación/Delegation member:

- Mariella Mazzotti, Directora, Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres (INMUJERES), email: mmazzotti@mides.gub.uy

Representante/Representative:

- Daniela Tellechea, Jefa de Relaciones Internacionales, Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres (INMUJERES), email: dtellechea@mides.gub.uy

B. Secretaría de las Naciones Unidas United Nations Secretariat

Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos (ACNUDH)/Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

- Ana Paula Souza, Oficial de Derechos Humanos, Chile, email: adesouza@ohchr.org

D. Organismos de las Naciones Unidas United Nations bodies

Entidad de las Naciones Unidas para la Igualdad de Género y el Empoderamiento de las Mujeres (ONU-Mujeres)/United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNWomen)

- Nadine Gasman, Representante en el Brasil, email: nadine.gasman@unwomen.org
- María Inés Salamanca, Representante en Chile, email: maria.salamanca@unwomen.org

Fondo de las Naciones Unidas para la Infancia (UNICEF)/United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

- Shelly Abdool, Asesora de Género, Oficina Regional para América Latina y el Caribe (UNICEF-LACRO), Panamá, email: sabdool@unicef.org

Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD)/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

- Silvia Rucks, Representante Residente y Coordinadora Residente del sistema de las Naciones Unidas, Chile, email: Silvia.rucks@one.un.org
- Elizabeth Guerrero, Especialista en Género y Gobernabilidad, Chile, email: Elizabeth.guerrero@undp.org

**E. Organismos especializados
Specialized agencies****Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura (FAO)/Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**

- Bettina Gatt, Consultora de Género, Chile, email: bettina.gatt@fao.org
- Marianne Holt-Olesen, Consultora Especialista en Género, Chile, email: Marianne.holtolesen@fao.org

Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (UNESCO)/United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

- Lidia Arthur Brito, Directora de la Oficina Regional de Ciencia de la UNESCO para América Latina y el Caribe, email: l.brito@unesco.org
- Mary Guinn Delaney, Asesora Regional en Educación en Salud y VIH, Santiago, email: mg.delaney@unesco.org

Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS)-Organización Panamericana de la Salud (OPS)/World Health Organization (WHO)-Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)

- Lilia Jara, Asesora Regional en Género y Etnicidad, Perú, email: jaralili@paho.org
- Magdalena Fernández, Consultora Encarga de Proyectos, email: fernandmag@paho.org

Organización de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo Industrial (ONUDI)/United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

- Manuel Albaladejo, Representante Regional para Chile, email: m.albaladejo@unido.org

Unión Internacional de Telecomunicaciones (UIT)/International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

- Sergio Scarabino, Representante, Oficina de Área de América del Sur, Chile, email: Sergio.scarabino@itu.int

Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM)/International Organization for Migration (IOM)

- Norberto Girón, Jefe de Misión, Chile, email: ngiron@iom.int
- Silvia Olego, Chile, email: solego@iom.int

F. Organizaciones intergubernamentales Intergovernmental organizations

ParlAmericas

- Anabella Zavagno, Directora Adjunta, Canadá, email: anabella.zavagno@parlamericas.org

Unión Europea/European Union

- Mar Merita Blat, Técnica Senior, Proyecto EUROsocial, Área de Género, Francia, email: mmeritablat-ef@eurosocial.eu

G. Panelistas Panellists

- Beate Stirø, Embajadora de Noruega en Chile, email: emb.santiago@mfa.no
- Leandro Sepúlveda, Investigador, Universidad Alberto Hurtado, Chile, email: lsepulve@cide.cl
- Cristina Bloj, Investigadora, Universidad Nacional de Rosario, Argentina, email: cbloj@fhumyar.unr.edu.ar
- Ana Gabriela Buquet, Directora del Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios de Género, Universidad Autónoma de México (UNAM), Consultora de la CEPAL, email: ana-buquet@cieg.unam.mx
- Marcela Arellano, Secretaria Ejecutiva de Educación Técnico Profesional, Ministerio de Educación, Chile, email: marcela.arellano@mineduc.cl
- Lidia Arthur Brito, Directora de la Oficina Regional de Ciencia de la UNESCO para América Latina y el Caribe, email: l.brito@unesco.org

H. Organizaciones no gubernamentales Non-governmental organizations

Organización Feminista Marcosur

- María de la Luz Garrido, Coordinadora, Uruguay, email: lgarrido@gmail.com

Fundación Margen

- Herminda González Inostroza, Presidenta, Chile, email: funmargen@hotmail.com
- Nazaria Navarro, Vicepresidenta, Chile, email: funmargen@hotmail.com
- Raquel del Rosario Vásquez, Directora, Chile, email: funmargen@hotmail.com
- Nancy Gutiérrez Medel, Coordinadora en Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos, Chile, email: funmargen@hotmail.com

ISFEM

- Ismini Anastassiou, Presidenta, Chile, email: contactoisfem.pfo@gmail.com
- Paz Figueroa, Directora, Chile, email: contactoisfem.pfo@gmail.com
- Carmen Croxatto, Vicepresidenta, Chile, email: contactoisfem.pfo@gmail.com

I. Otros participantes **Other participants**

- Manfred Haebig, Asesor Principal, Programa CEPAL/BMZ-GIZ, Chile, email: manfred.haebig@giz.de
- Hedda Oftung, Practicante, Embajada de Noruega en Chile, email: hedda.oftung@mta.no
- Marcela Talamantes Casillas, email: marcetalamantes@gmail.com

J. Secretaría **Secretariat**

Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL)/Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

- Raúl García-Buchaca, Secretario Ejecutivo Adjunto para Administración y Análisis de Programas/ Deputy Executive Secretary for Management and Programme Analysis
- María Nieves Rico, Directora, División de Asuntos de Género/Chief, Division for Gender Affairs, email: nieves.rico@cepal.org
- Luis Fidel Yáñez, Oficial a Cargo, Oficina del Secretario de la Comisión/Officer-in-Charge, Office of the Secretary of the Commission, email: luis.yanez@cepal.org
- Pamela Villalobos, Oficial de Asuntos Sociales, División de Asuntos de Género/Social Affairs Officer, Division for Gender Affairs, email: pamelavillalobos@cepal.org
- Jimena Arias Feijoó, Oficial de Asuntos Sociales, Oficina del Secretario de la Comisión/Social Affairs Officer, Office of the Secretary of the Commission, email: jimena.arias@cepal.org
- Lucía Scuro, Oficial de Asuntos Sociales, División de Asuntos de Género/Social Affairs Officer, Division for Gender Affairs, email: lucia.scuro@cepal.org
- Guido Camú, Oficial a Cargo, Unidad de Información Pública/Officer in Charge, Public Information Unit, email: guido.camu@cepal.org
- Jimmy Ferrer, Oficial de Asuntos Económicos, División de Desarrollo Sostenible y Asentamientos Humanos/Economic Affairs Officer, Sustainable Development and Human Settlements Division, email: jimmy.ferrer@cepal.org
- Ksenia Glebova, Oficial Asociada de Programas, División de Planificación de Programas y Operaciones/Associated Programme Officer, Programme Planning and Operations Division, email: ksenia.glebova@cepal.org
- Iliana Vaca-Trigo, Oficial Asociada de Asuntos Sociales, División de Asuntos de Género/Associate Social Affairs Officer, Division for Gender Affairs, email: iliana.vaca-trigo@cepal.org
- Nicole Bidegain, Oficial de Asuntos Sociales, División de Asuntos de Género/Social Affairs Officer, Division for Gender Affairs, email: Nicole.bidegain@cepal.org
- Antonin Menegaux, Oficial Asociado de Asuntos Económicos, División de Asuntos de Género/Associate Economic Affairs Officer, Division for Gender Affairs, email: antonin.menegaux@cepal.org
- Alejandra Valdés, Investigadora, División de Asuntos de Género/Researcher, Division for Gender Affairs, email: alejandra.valdes@cepal.org
- María Cristina Benavente, Asistente de Investigación, División de Asuntos de Género/Research Assistant, Division for Gender Affairs, email: mariacristina.benavente@cepal.org
- Miguel Sevilla, Asistente de Investigación, División de Asuntos de Género/Research Assistant, Division for Gender Affairs, email: miguel.sevilla@cepal.org
- Olga Segovia, Consultora, División de Asuntos de Género/Consultant, Division for Gender Affairs, email: olga.segovia@cepal.org