



Distr.
GENERAL
LC/MDM.56/3
20 February 2018
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH
18-00143

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

Havana, 5-6 October 2017

CONTENTS

| | | <i>Paragraph</i> | <i>Page</i> |
|---------|---|------------------|-------------|
| A. | ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK | 1-9 | 3 |
| | Place and date of the meeting | 1 | 3 |
| | Attendance..... | 2-8 | 3 |
| | Chair | 9 | 3 |
| B. | AGENDA..... | 10 | 4 |
| C. | SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS..... | 11-60 | 4 |
| Annex 1 | Agreements..... | - | 15 |
| Annex 2 | List of participants..... | - | 18 |

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-sixth meeting in Havana on 5 and 6 October 2016.

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, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Uruguay.

3. Also attending were representatives of the following member countries of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC): Colombia, Haiti, Italy, Paraguay and Peru.

4. The Cayman Islands, an associate member of ECLAC, was also represented.

5. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the following United Nations agencies, funds and programmes: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) 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)-World Health Organization (WHO) and International Organization for Migration (IOM).

7. Representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations also attended the meeting: CAF-Development Bank of Latin America, Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), Organization of American States (OAS) and ParlAmericas.

8. Also present were representatives of non-governmental organizations and other special guests.

Chair

9. The Presiding Officers, as elected at the thirteenth session of the Regional Conference, were as follows:

Chair: Uruguay

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

¹ See annex 2.

B. AGENDA

10. The Presiding Officers adopted the following agenda:
 1. Adoption of the agenda.
 2. Session commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the first session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in the Economic and Social Development of Latin America, held in Havana in 1977, and tribute to Vilma Espín, first President of the Federation of Cuban Women and first Chair of the Regional Conference.
 3. High-level panel on the implementation of gender equality plans in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
 4. Presentation of the repository of legislation on migration and gender of the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean.
 5. Information regarding 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.
 6. Discussion on the theme of the fourteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (Santiago, 2019).
 7. Report by the working group on the regional fund in support of women's and feminist organizations and movements.
 8. Other matters.
 9. Adoption of agreements.

C. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

11. At the opening session, statements were made by Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, First Vice-President of the Councils of State and Ministers of Cuba; Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary 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. After welcoming the participants, the First Vice-President of the Councils of State and Ministers of Cuba drew attention to the longstanding commitment of the Government of Cuba to gender equality, which had played a central role in the political project of the Cuban revolution and provided firm foundations for the country's development and the culture of expanding rights. He also said that Cuban women had been in the vanguard in the struggle for development and were also the beneficiaries of public policies that guaranteed their access to employment, health and their full participation in political, social and cultural life.

13. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC said that ECLAC stood in solidarity with the Government and people of Cuba in the face of the devastating effects that Hurricane Irma had wrecked on the island. She recalled that the first session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in the Economic and Social Development of Latin America had been held in Havana 40 years ago, marking a turning point in the struggle for women's rights and gender equality under the leadership of Vilma Espín. The Conference was a forum for dialogue and coordination among various actors, characterized by continuity and innovation. Concern about gender equality and women's rights in the development processes had remained constant, but innovative steps had been taken to address the gender inequalities that shaped women's economic, physical and decision-making autonomy. However, despite the progress made, poverty still had a woman's face: one third of Latin American women did not earn an income and were economically dependent and almost half had no link with the labour market. In addition there were challenges with regard to wage gaps, violence against women and respect for sexual and reproductive rights, among other things.

14. The director of INMUJERES of Uruguay and Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean said that the collective process within the Regional Conference on Women had led to the adoption of the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030 and its transformation into a political and technical instrument that recognized that diversity must be promoted in order to support equality for women. Public policy should adopt an approach that was specific to the characteristics of women and of the various countries of the region, and the structural challenges of inequality must also be overcome in order to achieve just societies and democracies. Lastly, the virtuous circle among States, governments and women's and feminist organizations and movements must be strengthened in order to reaffirm the commitments made in the Montevideo Strategy.

Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

15. The Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, submitted the provisional agenda for consideration by the Presiding Officers, who adopted it without amendment.

Session commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the first session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in the Economic and Social Development of Latin America, held in Havana in 1977, and tribute to Vilma Espín, first President of the Federation of Cuban Women and first Chair of the Regional Conference (agenda item 2)

16. Under this agenda item, a round table was held on the fortieth anniversary of the first session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in the Economic and Social Development of Latin America, which was moderated by María Nieves Rico, Chief of the Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC, and the panellists were: Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC; Yolanda Ferrer, President of the International Relations Committee of the National People's Assembly of Cuba; Virginia Vargas, co-founder of the Flora Tristán Centre of Peru; Mariela Castro Espín, Director of the National Centre for Sex Education (CENESEX) of Cuba; and Carmen Moreno, Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) of the Organization of American States (OAS).

17. The Chief of the Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC opened the round table by reading the letter sent by Enrique Iglesias, Executive Secretary of ECLAC in 1977, the year in which the first session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in the Economic and Social Development in Latin America was held. She then gave a historical overview of the Conference and noted the major milestones achieved on the path to the Montevideo Strategy as well as the ongoing dialogue with global processes. She

also referred to the political and ideological discussions that had occurred in parallel with the global changes in thinking on development, equality and women's rights between the 1970s and the present day, and said that there had been a shift from the integration of women in development to sustainable development with gender equality and women's autonomy.

18. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC identified equal access to education, health and social security, income equality, and equality with productive and territorial innovation and convergence, as objectives on the path towards gender equality. In order for women to be fully emancipated, they must have economic, physical and decision-making autonomy. She referred to the demographic changes that had occurred in recent years and said that poverty affected women more than men, despite the fact that women were increasingly better educated.

19. The President of the International Relations Committee of the National People's Assembly of Cuba gave an overview of the various meetings held in defence of women's rights that had culminated in the decision to convene the first session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in the Economic and Social Development of Latin America in 1977 and noted that the Regional Conference on Women had been able to bring countries together on regional criteria to adopt a common position when in international forums. As Vilma Espín had pointed out, women's issues must be considered in the context of economic and other social problems.

20. The co-founder of the Flora Tristán Peruvian Women's Centre of Peru said that ECLAC was an essential point of reference in shaping Latin American critical thought and that it had played a key role in including gender equality and women's rights in global agendas. She also referred to the Quito Consensus, adopted at the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in 2007, which identified parity as the driving force behind democracy and basis for an intercultural perspective. Lastly, she reflected on the great paradox of the Consensuses, which were adopted wholeheartedly by governments at the sessions of the Conference but then were not implemented fully by the countries.

21. The Director of CENESEX of Cuba gave a presentation on sexuality education in the social transformation processes of the Cuban revolution. She said that the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), a project run by women to empower women as rights-holders, had been established in 1960. The national family planning programme had been created in 1964 and a multidisciplinary and intersectoral group had been set up in 1972 to develop the national sexuality education programme. Sexuality education had then become a State policy with the aim of achieving a respectful coexistence and putting an end to controlling and violent relationships.

22. Lastly, the Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission of Women of OAS spoke about the Conference that had brought together women from all over the world for the first time, the World Conference of the International Women's Year, held in Mexico in 1975, on the theme of "equality, development and peace" and in which Vilma Espín had actively participated. She also spoke about States' responsibility to create services that enabled women to integrate into society while their children received adequate care, the right to equal pay and the importance of women's political participation.

High-level panel on the implementation of gender equality plans in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (agenda item 3)

23. The panel comprised: Pamela Villalobos, Social Affairs Officer, Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC; Teresa Amarelle, Secretary General of the Federation of Cuban Women; Claudia Pascual, Minister of Women's Affairs and Gender Equity of Chile; Alejandra Mora, Minister for the Status of Women and Executive President of the National Women's Institute (INAMU) in Costa Rica; and Mariella Mazzotti, Director of the National Women's Institute (INMUJERES) of Uruguay.

24. The Social Affairs Officer of the Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC said that the definition of institutional architecture and intersectoral work, the participatory design, links with the national development plan, estimated resources and expenditures, and the implementation of follow-up and monitoring systems were key aspects in the design of gender equality plans within the framework of sustainable development. Those aspects helped to achieve the sustainability of the plan in political, technical and financial terms.

25. The General Secretary of the Federation of Cuban Women said that equality plans that included regular assessments were important. Since the third evaluation of the National Action Plan for Follow-up of the Beijing Conference in 2013, an inter-institutional commission had been created to look into updating the Plan in the light of international and regional commitments on gender equality and sustainable development. Among the challenges for the future, she stressed the importance of preparing women to use new, non-State management methods and to enter different forms of employment, while promoting the redistribution of care work between men and women.

26. The Minister of Women's Affairs and Gender Equity of Chile referred to the participatory process of developing the fourth national plan for equality between men and women for the period 2018-2030. She drew attention to the collaboration of ECLAC in particular during the methodology design stage of the plan. She said that the Ministry was finalizing the information gathering phase which had been conducted in a participatory manner through meetings with a wide range of women across the country. That information would then be systematized and the plan document prepared. The implementation and monitoring phase would begin in 2018. The plan would be submitted to the interministerial committee for gender equality in order to be adopted as a State policy for 2030.

27. The Minister for the Status of Women of Costa Rica presented the main lessons learned from the implementation of the national gender equality and equity policy 2007-2017. She also highlighted the assistance provided by ECLAC for the design of the gender equality and equity policy 2018-2030 and outlined some of the challenges faced. The challenges included mainstreaming an intersectional approach into the policy, providing technical support to inter-institutional negotiations, building architecture for equality within the State with strategic allies and prioritizing services tailored to the diversity of women and with specific budget allocated.

28. The Director of INMUJERES of Uruguay reported on the process of preparing a national gender equality strategy within the framework of the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030 and the process of designing a national development strategy for 2050. She said that the equality strategy included aspirations for 2030, policy guidelines and strategic approaches aligned with the implementation pillars of the Montevideo Strategy, and drew attention to the work with subnational and local governments, citizen's participation and the inter-institutional framework. A public validation process of the strategy would be undertaken in November 2017 and it would then be put forward for adoption by the National Gender Council in December 2017.

29. The representative of Argentina said that the higher hierarchical status of the machinery for the advancement of women in her country had allowed a substantial number of personnel to be hired and a task force to be established to develop an equal opportunities plan. She also asked for support and that the exchange of experiences continue in order to bolster the policy-building process. The representative of Peru reported on the development of the fourth equality plan for her country and reflected on experiences shared by the panel, noting that the design of plans for 2030 would allow more long-term changes for gender equality to be followed up. In that regard, the representative of the Dominican Republic said that the new equality plan for her country was expected to cover the period 2018-2030.

30. The representative of Haiti said that her country had had a gender equality policy since 2014, which included the 2014-2020 plan for equality between women and men, and that sectoral consultations had been conducted to raise awareness among stakeholders. The representative of Suriname said that her country was developing a gender policy 2017-2021. The representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines drew attention to the need for progress to be made towards the construction of a national gender equality policy in order to mobilize political will, stakeholder partnerships and dedicated resources. Meanwhile, the representative of Brazil noted the challenge posed by working in a coordinated manner to align the indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the indicators for the follow-up to the Montevideo Strategy and the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development.

31. The representative of the Dominican Republic asked that the technical assistance provided by ECLAC for the design of gender equality plans be included in the agreements of the fifty-sixth meeting of the Presiding Officers. She also drew attention to the technical assistance provided by ECLAC with regard to setting up national gender equality observatories and the need to develop further the process of sharing good practices among countries.

32. Lastly, the representative of Mexico, in addition to reporting on mainstreaming the gender perspective into the National Development Plan for the first time and the fact that, as a result, sectoral, special and institutional programmes would include that perspective, she said that it was increasingly important to mainstream the gender perspective into budgets. She recognized the contribution of ECLAC to innovative reflections on alternatives to traditional economic thinking and on the concept of equality between men and women as a nodal component of those alternatives. She also said that, in the region, equality between women and men was considered a common good of humanity, crucial for human and sustainable development.

Presentation of the repository of legislation on migration and gender of the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (agenda item 4)

33. The representatives of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC presented the repository of legislation on migration and gender of the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, which was welcomed by delegations. They highlighted its usefulness as a tool to visualize regulatory progress in the protection of the human rights of women migrants and design public policies using an intersectional approach that addressed the specific needs of migrant women.

34. The Deputy Director General of IOM gave a lecture on “migration and gender equality: challenges for action”, in which she stressed the importance of data collection for analysing migration from a gender perspective, including how gender affected all aspects and types of migration, economic development and growth, access to social services and differentiated risks and vulnerabilities. She said that migration policies should include measures to protect migrant women and girls from potential abuses and exploitation and to ensure that they had access to information, assistance and mechanisms that guaranteed the full enjoyment of their rights.

Information regarding 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 (agenda item 5)

35. The Officer-in-Charge of the Office of the Secretary of the Commission reported on relevant aspects of other intergovernmental meetings of ECLAC and the importance of mainstreaming the gender perspective into those bodies. He referred mainly to the sixteenth meeting of the Regional Council for Planning of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES), that would be held in Lima on 12 October 2017; the second session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, that would be held in Montevideo from 25 to 27 October 2017; the special meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, that would be held in Santiago from 7 to 9 November 2017, and the ninth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, that would be held in Aguascalientes, Mexico, from 14 to 16 November 2017. He also mentioned the second meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, that would be held in Santiago in April 2018, and the thirty-seventh session of ECLAC, to be held in Havana from 7 to 11 May 2018, and where the seventieth anniversary of ECLAC would be commemorated. Lastly, he reported on the reform of the United Nations development system and on the fundamental role played by the regional commissions in that process.

Discussion on the theme of the fourteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (Santiago, 2019) (agenda item 6)

36. The Chief of the Division for Gender Affairs presented to the countries a proposal for the theme to be addressed at the fourteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, which would take place in Santiago in 2019. She said that it appeared from exchanges held with some country representatives and the discussions in the meetings of the Presiding Officers that there was interest in addressing the issue of women's autonomy in changing economic scenarios and examining the national processes used to execute the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030 at the next session of the Conference. Taking into account the complex regional and international context, she suggested that progress could be made on the conceptual link between progressive structural change and gender equality at the Conference.

37. She said that two questions could guide the discussions: what economic policies would help to create the conditions for gender equality and women's autonomy? And how could the exercise of women's rights and autonomy help to reduce economic, productive and social gaps? Those two questions would allow the macro, meso and micro levels of the economy to be examined in a synergistic manner. The first question would encourage analysis of fiscal policies, productive policies, and automation and robotization processes from a gender perspective, as well as their implications for women's participation in the labour force and for care systems. It would also promote examination of migrant women's contribution to the economy. Examination of the second question would explore, for example, how gender-based violence and lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services could act as a barrier to women's economic autonomy, confirming the importance of multidimensional policies that addressed the three dimensions of women's autonomy and the linkages among them. Lastly, she said that the Conference could be an opportunity to make progress in the follow-up process of the implementation pillars of Montevideo Strategy, taking into account qualitative indicators on the execution of public policies.

38. The representatives of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico and Uruguay welcomed the proposal by ECLAC and stressed the importance of establishing links between the macro, meso and micro levels of the economy. They noted the need for women to be integrated into the labour market and productive work, the redistribution of unpaid and care work, and the contributions of migrant women to be addressed from that perspective. The representatives of Brazil, Chile and Peru also pointed out that in order for a gender-based approach to be mainstreamed into macroeconomic policies, especially fiscal policies, the ministries of economy, finance and planning must be involved in the discussions. The representatives of Mexico and Panama then said that the ability of the machineries for the advancement of women to engage in dialogue with those actors must be strengthened.

39. The representatives of Colombia, Costa Rica and Mexico also emphasized the positive effects of women's economic autonomy on the other dimensions of autonomy and, in particular, on the eradication of violence against women. The representatives of Argentina, Brazil, the Dominican Republic and Paraguay said that it was important to pursue comprehensive policies to address violence against women, giving particular consideration to educational policies. The representative of Chile said that the fourteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women would be an opportunity to further efforts to analyse the three autonomies and the linkages among them.

40. The representative of Uruguay said that it was crucial that the Conference evaluate the implementation of the Montevideo Strategy and the representative of Paraguay added that the evaluation should be done in conjunction with the national reports on the progress made towards Sustainable Development Goal 5 of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. The representatives of Chile and Costa Rica said that indicators to measure the impact and achievements, especially with regard to structural shifts towards gender equality, must be developed. They also discussed what steps could be taken towards universal policies that adopted the intersectional approach and were sensitive to the differences among women.

41. The representative of the Dominican Republic said that gender equality plans and policies must be in synergy with national policies for achieving the SDGs and the representative of Panama added that that would require strengthening the machineries for the advancement of women and partnerships, especially with the ministries of foreign affairs.

42. Statements were then made by the representatives of the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system on the advancement of women in Latin America and of intergovernmental organizations. The representative of UN-Women spoke about the relationship between the theme of the fourteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean and the priority theme of the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women to be held in 2018, which would be the empowerment of rural women and girls. She said that the Conference could be an opportunity to rethink the development models in the region, taking into account the challenges of climate change. The representative of UNICEF commented on the joint work undertaken to understand the multiple forms of discrimination faced by women and girls and the need to strengthen further the linkages between gender and childhood indicators. The representative of IOM drew attention to the inclusion of the contribution of migrant women to sustainable development as a theme to be addressed at the next session of the Conference and undertook to continue working together with ECLAC. The representative of FAO spoke about the collaboration with ECLAC to ensure that the Gender Strategy for the 2025 Plan on Food Security, Nutrition and Eradication of Hunger of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) was aligned with the Montevideo Strategy. She reported on the development of a methodology to measure indicator 5.a.2 of the SDGs on women's access to land ownership, and requested ECLAC, in its capacity as technical secretariat of the Conference, to continue

that work and set up a forum for discussing the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the region. The representative of OAS expressed the Organization's commitment to continue working to implement the Convention of Belém do Pará and announced initiatives to promote women's political participation. Lastly, the representative of ParlAmericas highlighted the role of parliaments in the adoption of laws and budgets and said that ParlAmericas stood ready to support the preparations for the next session of the Conference.

43. The representatives of civil society organizations expressed their interest in the discussions on the theme of the next session of the Conference and in participating in the preparatory process. They noted that one of the approaches that guided public policies, agreed in the Montevideo Strategy, referred to parity-based democracy and secularism, and asked that the agenda for the next session of the Conference include the matter of States' lack of secularism as a barrier to the guarantee of women's rights. Lastly, they reiterated that the indicators to be developed for the follow-up to the implementation of the Montevideo Strategy should be aligned with the follow-up of the SDGs and the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development.

Report by the working group on the regional fund in support of women's and feminist organizations and movements (agenda item 7)

44. The representative of Mexico presented the report, drawing attention to the fact that it had been drafted between May and September 2017 with the active participation of the member States of the working group on the regional fund in support of women's and feminist organizations and movements and of civil society organizations. She set out the main points of the proposal, including the conceptualization and definition of the regional fund, the organization of the fund, the process for allocating resources, the evaluation committee and the identification of recipient organizations. Lastly, she referred to five aspects that should be addressed in the future: the establishment of rules for the fund; regional assistance to define the legal aspects; the development of risk prevention guidelines; the establishment of the fund's governance framework and mechanisms for transparency and accountability; and the setting of a calendar of work.

45. The Director of INMUMERES of Uruguay, in her capacity as Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, congratulated the representative of Mexico for the commitment shown and work carried out and for having incorporated the inputs and suggestions of the countries and civil society organizations. She also invited governments, especially those of the English-speaking Caribbean countries, to be part of the working group.

46. The representatives of the other governments commended the Government of Mexico on the work undertaken and the proposal. The representatives of Argentina, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay recognized the contribution of women's and feminist movements to normative, institutional and social developments towards guaranteeing the rights and autonomy of women in the region and affirmed the importance of making progress in setting up the fund. In particular, the representatives of Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay expressed their support for the adoption of the report presented by Mexico.

47. The representative of Colombia said that her government recognized the mandates emanating from the Santo Domingo Consensus and the Montevideo Strategy with regard to the fund. In particular, she said that it was important that the fund receive voluntary contributions from States and that the administration of the fund should be intergovernmental in nature and, therefore, that civil society organizations should not have voting rights in the fund's governing bodies. The representative of Costa Rica also reflected on the need to ensure that resources were allocated democratically and that they were given to women's organizations with less access to financing. The representative of Argentina suggested that the fund could

be used to finance binational and regional projects. In addition, the representatives of Chile, Costa Rica and El Salvador said that a financing strategy must be set out to ensure the sustainability of the fund's resources in the medium term.

48. The representative of Chile reiterated that her country supported and had the political will to establish the fund. She requested more time to consider the proposal and send comments. The representatives of Brazil and Panama echoed Chile's request for more time to consider the proposal and the representative of Panama suggested that the deadline for receiving comments should be December 2017. Meanwhile, the representatives of Honduras and Panama expressed interest in joining the working group.

49. The representative of Mexico expressed appreciation for all the contributions and comments received, as they would enrich the document, and said that the working group would prepare a schedule of activities setting out the steps to be followed.

50. Lastly, in the light of the various comments, the Chair of the Presiding Officers proposed that the document prepared by the Government of Mexico and the consultation process undertaken by the working group be welcomed and their discussions continue, respecting the timetable to be drawn up by the working group before December 2017. That proposal was welcomed by the representatives.

Adoption of agreements (agenda item 9)

51. The representatives adopted the agreements contained in annex 1 of this report.

Closing session

52. At the closing session, statements were made by Mariella Mazzotti, Director of the National Women's Institute (INMUJERES) of Uruguay; Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); Ileana Núñez Mordoche, Vice-Minister of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment of Cuba; Lara Blanco, Deputy Regional Director for the Americas and the Caribbean of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women); Sheila Roseau, Deputy Regional Director of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); Claudia Brito, Regional Gender Officer of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); Eugenia Piza-López, Head of the Gender Practice Area of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and Maria Nieves Rico, Chief of the Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC.

53. The Director of INMUJERES of Uruguay said that democracy-building required gender justice and that countries could not work in isolation to achieve it. Parity democracy should be promoted by women's and feminist organizations. Various contributions had been made during the meeting that she hoped would lead to progress on gender policies.

54. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC said that a new culture had been created in recent decades, which had seen women move from demanding equal opportunities to demanding equal rights. She recalled that the Montevideo Strategy identified critical challenges and set out guidelines on the policies, needs and opportunities that should be used to implement the Regional Gender Agenda by 2030. It was time to match words with deeds and steps must be taken to ensure that equality plans were incorporated into development plans and budgets. Lastly, collective forums must be established to address the challenges related to gender equality, as sharing successes and setbacks would help to overcome obstacles.

55. The Vice-Minister of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment of Cuba said that the tribute to Vilma Espín demonstrated the commitment of the Cuban people to her ideas and efforts to promote gender equality and women's rights. She was of the opinion that ECLAC, in particular the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, was the appropriate forum in which to continue discussing those issues, and noted that further work would need to be done in order to achieve the targets discussed at the fifty-sixth meeting of the Presiding Officers, particularly in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

56. The Deputy Regional Director for the Americas and the Caribbean of UN-Women, after reiterating the commitment of the Entity to regional gender equality mechanisms, referred to the research carried out by UN-Women on the topic of women's economic empowerment. She also reflected on what could be done to improve the legal and social status of women and on the need to address the issue of climate change and its impact on women. She said that a new agreement should be reached with academia in order to understand better the adverse effects. Lastly, she called for data in the reports to be disaggregated by sex.

57. The Deputy Regional Director of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) said that gender equality was a fundamental human right and that since the approval of the Brasilia Consensus in 2010 UNFPA had expressed its commitment to support governments and civil society in implementing the agreements. UNFPA had undertaken numerous regional and national initiatives with political, civil and judicial stakeholders to promote reforms to achieve gender equality and universal access to sexual and reproductive health. As empowered women helped to reduce poverty, promote development and address the world's most pressing problems, it was essential to support national machineries for the advancement of women, strengthen capacities to prevent gender-based violence and increase women's political participation. Nevertheless, to achieve those objectives, men must also be involved in those processes.

58. The Regional Gender Officer of FAO said that the intersectoral nature of public policy within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals should be examined and new partnerships established to promote the development of Latin American and Caribbean countries. With regard to SDG 2, she considered that actors, such as ministries of agriculture, the environment and planning, should be invited to join the discussions. Moreover, in order to have sustainable public policies on the issue of gender equality across the region, SDG 5 must be mainstreamed into the other Goals. Lastly, she noted the important role played by rural women in the region.

59. The Head of the Gender Practice Area of UNDP said that the following issues must be addressed in order to deal with the new challenges: making gender equality policies the drivers of change; rethinking resilience from the perspective of women; understanding new forms of violence against women; constructing a new model of economic development in which women could move out of labour informality and vulnerability; and understanding the complexities that had set back women's political participation.

60. The Chief of the Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC spoke about women's leadership of governments of the region and the need to raise women's profiles. She also said that once structural challenges had been identified, active public policies would be needed. While there was a need to establish agreements and to plan, any plans should have the necessary resources. She expressed appreciation for the efforts of all the participants to reach consensus on the agreements and thanked the Federation of Cuban Women for organizing the meeting.

Annex 1

AGREEMENTS

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

1. *Commend* the Government of Cuba and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean for holding the commemorative session and the round table on the fortieth anniversary of the first session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in the Economic and Social Development of Latin America, and the tribute to Vilma Espín, first President of the Federation of Cuban Women and first Chair of the Regional Conference;

2. *Acknowledge* the past contributions of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to building a heterodox understanding of the economy and of gender equality as a universal public good, as well as recognizing that mainstreaming gender equality is essential for achieving sustainable development;

3. *Welcome* the repository of legislation on migration and gender of the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, compiled jointly by the International Organization for Migration and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and urge United Nations bodies to contribute to the sustainability of the Observatory;

4. *Recognize* and welcome the technical assistance provided by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean for national gender equality observatories, facilitating data comparability and the construction of time series;

5. *Reaffirm* the commitment to formulate State plans and policies for gender equality linked to national sustainable development strategies, in accordance with the agreements included in the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030, in order to ensure the mainstreaming of the gender perspective and women's autonomies and rights in public policies;

6. *Recognize* the high-level panel on implementing gender equality plans in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a space for peer-to-peer exchanges of experiences and lessons learned, and thank all the countries that participated in that dialogue;

7. *Highlight* the methodology for preparing gender equality plans within the sustainable development framework prepared by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and request that it provide technical assistance to governments that are designing their plans or reformulating existing ones and promote experience-sharing among countries;

8. *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;

9. *Reaffirm* the commitment to strengthen the capacities of the machineries for the advancement of women to enter into dialogue and ensure coordination with different government bodies, in particular with ministries of the economy, with a view to mainstreaming the gender perspective in economic policies and budgets, and with ministries of foreign affairs in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

10. *Acknowledge* the open-ended efforts of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to convene, since 1992, meetings of the Specialized Agencies and Other Bodies of the United Nations System on the Advancement of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, and, taking into account the report of the Secretary-General entitled *Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: ensuring a better future for all*, reaffirm the importance of this body in supporting the countries in the implementation of the Montevideo Strategy and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;¹

11. *Request* the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, in the framework of the meeting of Specialized Agencies and Other Bodies of the United Nations System on the Advancement of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, to compile a progress report on mainstreaming the gender perspective in the Sustainable Development Goals and the achievement of Goal 5 —achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls— as part of the regional follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to include the Goals' indicators in the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean;

12. *Thank* the secretariat for the information regarding the second session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, which will be held in Montevideo from 25 to 27 October 2017, the special meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, which will take place in Santiago from 7 to 9 November 2017, the ninth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, which will be held in Aguascalientes, Mexico, from 14 to 17 November 2017, and the second meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, which will take place in Mexico in 2018, and request that it continue its efforts to successfully mainstream the gender perspective into the discussions and commitments of the Forum and the aforementioned subsidiary bodies of the Commission;

13. *Adopt* women's autonomy in changing economic scenarios and the progress indicators of the Montevideo Strategy as the main theme of the fourteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, taking into consideration the discussions at the meeting;

14. *Request* the secretariat to develop a road map for the preparatory process for the fourteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean that includes subregional meetings, meetings with experts and a broad participatory process that draws on the successful working methodology used for the thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Montevideo from 25 to 28 October 2016;

15. *Welcome* the document prepared by the Government of Mexico and the consultation process undertaken by the working group on the regional fund in support of women's and feminist organizations and movements, and continue their discussions, respecting the timeline to be drawn up by the working group before December 2017;

¹ A/72/124-E/2018/3.

16. *Also welcome* the incorporation of the Governments of Honduras and Panama into the working group on the regional fund in support of women's and feminist organizations and movements;

17. *Acknowledge* the institutional progress made by the machineries for the advancement of women in the region, in particular the creation of the National Women's Institution of Argentina;

18. *Express* their solidarity with Governments, peoples and especially the women and girls of Guatemala and Mexico who have faced the consequences of the devastating earthquakes, and of Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, the British Virgin Islands, Costa Rica, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Martinique, Montserrat, Puerto Rico, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Martin, the Turks and Caicos Islands, the United States Virgin Islands and Central America, which were badly hit by the recent hurricanes, and promote cooperation on extreme weather event adaption and responses, disaster risk management and resilience-building from a gender perspective;

19. *Welcome* the humanitarian aid provided by the Governments of the region and the organizations of the United Nations system as part of the recovery efforts in the areas affected by the recent natural disasters;

20. *Thank* and congratulate the Government of Cuba for the excellent organization of the meeting, especially the work and the leadership of the Federation of Cuban Women, and express strong support for and solidarity with the Cuban people in the face of the recent storms and hurricanes that have affected the island and recognize the national recovery efforts undertaken, despite the economic, financial and trade embargo;

21. *Convene* the fifty-seventh meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean in the second quarter of 2018 at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago.

Annex 2

**LISTA DE PARTICIPANTES
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

**A. Estados miembros de la Comisión
States members of the Commission**

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EL SALVADOR

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HAITÍ/HAITI

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PERÚ/PERU

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- Amarilis Santana Cedano de Martínez, Senadora por la Provincia La Romana, email: astriunfo2006@hotmail.com
- Sergia Galván, Integrante del Consejo Directivo, Red de Salud de las Mujeres de América Latina y el Caribe, email: sergiagalvan@gmail.com

SAINT KITTS Y NEVIS/SAINT KITTS AND NEVISRepresentante/Representative:

- Hazel Brandy-Williams, Minister of Gender Affairs, Social Development, Youth and Sports Affairs, email: hazel.brandywilliams@niagov.com

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SURINAMERepresentante/Representative:

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URUGUAYMiembro de la delegación/Delegation member:

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Associate members

ISLAS CAIMÁN/CAYMAN ISLANDS

Miembro de la delegación/Delegation member:

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C. 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 (UN-Women)

- Lara Blanco, Directora Regional Adjunta para las Américas y el Caribe, Panamá, email: lara.blanco@unwomen.org

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

- María Machicao, Representante en Cuba, email: mmachicado@unicef.org

Fondo de Población de las Naciones Unidas (UNFPA)/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

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

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- Dalia Acosta, Coordinadora Técnica, Campaña ÚNETE para Poner Fin a la Violencia contra las Mujeres, Oficina de la Coordinadora Residente en Cuba, email: dalia.acosta@one.un.org

Programa Mundial de Alimentos (PMA)/World Food Programme (WFP)

- Luis Plácido Ortega Izquierdo, Asistente de Programas, Cuba, email: placido.ortega@wfp.org

D. 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)

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

- Katherine Muller-Marín, Coordinadora Residente a.i. del Sistema de las Naciones Unidas en Cuba, email: k.muller-marin@unesco.org

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

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**E. Organizaciones intergubernamentales
Intergovernmental organizations**

Banco de Desarrollo de América Latina (CAF)/Development Bank of Latin America (CAF)

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Organización de los Estados Americanos (OEA)/Organization of American States (OAS)

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ParlAmericas

- Ligia Elena Fallas Rodríguez, Diputada; Vicepresidenta, Red Parlamentaria para la Igualdad de Género, Costa Rica, email: ligia.fallas@asamblea.go.cr

**F. Invitado de honor
Guest of honour**

- Miguel Mario Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, Primer Vicepresidente de los Consejos de Estado y de Ministros de Cuba

G. Invitados especiales **Special guests**

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- María Esther Reus González, Ministra de Justicia, Cuba
- José Ramón Balaguer Cabrera, Jefe, Departamento de Relaciones Internacionales, Comité Central del Partido Comunista, Cuba
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H. Panelistas **Panelists**

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K. Secretaría
Secretariat

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