

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela



**Speech of the President of the National Institute for
Women in Venezuela
Ms María León**

**IV, V and VI Report of the
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of
Discrimination Against Women
CEDAW**

**34th Session of CEDAW Committee
21-27 January, 2006
New York – United States of America**

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Madam Chairperson
Ladies and Gentlemen Members of the Committee,

I would like to cordially greet all of you on behalf of our President Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, of the revolutionary Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, of Venezuelan people and of all delegation members.

We will present a report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW, from a period that includes part of the former Government until 1999, and our administration from 1999 until today.

In these last years, our governmental efforts, always respectful of international commitments, particularly these linked to women's and men's human rights, have been focused on gender mainstreaming by promoting, applying, and evaluating programs and policies in a Government that have radically changed our History. It has restored our pride of being Venezuelan women and men, by respecting commitments to equality, justice and sovereignty bequeathed to us by our men and women Liberators.

The main objective of our Revolution is to reach a higher amount of happiness to Venezuelan people and other peoples of the world, in order to contribute to reach world peace, solidarity and the universe's balance. To summarize our purpose, I would like to quote the preamble of our Constitution which comprises the essence of our Bolivarian Revolution:

"...to the supreme end of reshaping the Republic to establish a democratic, participatory and self-reliant, multiethnic and multicultural society in a just, federal and decentralized State that embodies the values of freedom, independence, peace, solidarity, the common good, the nation's territorial integrity, comity and the rule of law for this and future generations; guarantees the right to life, work, learning, education, social justice and equality, without discrimination or subordination of any kind; promotes peaceful cooperation among nations and furthers and strengthens Latin American integration in accordance with the principle of nonintervention and national self-determination of the people, the universal and indivisible

guarantee of human rights, the democratization of international society, nuclear disarmament, ecological balance and environmental resources as the common and inalienable heritage of humanity..”

The Bolivarian process is authentically democratic and inclusive. It promotes popular participation, active contribution and the integration of all sectors of society previously excluded, especially women. However, as any revolutionary process, every day, it faces imperialistic aggression; manipulation of monopolized mass media which distorts any government action, trying to deceive people, in order to revert the great achievements of the Revolution. In its eagerness of destruction, the empire has attacked, in different bloody ways, the Venezuelan people. It tried to cut off our victories. For example, at the April 2002 coup d'état, our president was kidnapped and then bravely rescued by civilian and military patriotic people; from December 2002 to February 2003, an employers' oil strike caused a lot of economic losses to our Nation. This sabotage was possible because our oil industry was in transnational hands. We were also affected by organized terrorism against our institutions and people, threats of magnicide, mass media campaign of satanization inside and outside the revolutionary process; systematic attacks against institutional credibility and above all against the electoral system credibility.

Figures are irrefutable. By comparing socio-economical results from 2001-2002 we find evidence of the terrible consequences of these criminal aggressions against our people.

Dear Friends, it is of fundamental importance for us that you know our women's achievements with the Bolivarian Revolution. However, before recount them, we would like to thank the pre-sessional working group for the previous questions they sent to us. This request allowed us to realize that we lacked some information that we needed in order to reply.

We are sure that in this working session and dialogue, we will add a good part of the information requested for you. In our delegation, there are outstanding specialist women that will respond to all your questions. However, some issues are still in progress in our country. These issues have served as foundations for us to take measures that we will let you know about in the future and, which will surely generate positive results in the next report.

In the judicial sphere, we would like to emphasize the 1999 Bolivarian Constitution and the revolutionary achievements of the Venezuelan legislation on women's issues. For example, the Article 88 of the Constitution establishes that domestic work performed by women is an economic activity that creates added value and produces wealth and social welfare; Article 21 recognizes that all persons are equal before the law and to make it real and effective, the law shall adopt affirmative measures for the benefit of any group that is discriminated. Other important articles are 76 and 77 that establish social and family rights. We also emphasize, the Law of the Land, in its Article 14 establishes that women heads of household will have preferential rights at the awarding of parcels of land; women will also receive pregnancy allowance (pre-and-post natal subsidy). Sexual and

Reproductive Health Regulation, carried out by the Ministry of Health, guarantees sexual and reproductive rights of Venezuelan, for women and men.

In the institutional sphere, we emphasize what follows: The National Institute of Women (INAMUJER) was created on October 25, 1999 and the Women's Development Bank (BANMUJER) was created on March 8, 2001. Likewise, a huge human talent, material and financial resources were incorporated in these institutions. This is evident by the increased budget allocation in these institutions.

We also note that in December 2005, the National Institute of Statistics (INE), with the participation of Governmental Institutions and Non Governmental Organizations, created a Sub-committee on gender statistics. We would like to emphasize that in May 2005, the Commander, President Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, signed his approval for the elaboration of the national public budget taking into account gender equity. This represents a giant step towards gender mainstreaming in public policies nationwide.

On parity political rights we have advanced firmly, thanks to the joined efforts of INAMUJER and women organizations. It was named "50% y 50% de participación política" (fifty-fifty political participation), as it was shown on the National Electoral Council resolution in 2005. It asks for proposing candidates for all deliberating bodies, national, municipal and parishes, in an alternative, gender sensitive and parity way. This support has contributed to women's representation which increased the percentage of women Deputies at the current National Assembly. It raised from 10 % to 25 %.

You can see that governmental action towards women includes regional, local and communal instances on a participative and co-responsible conception. This is demonstrated in social and grassroots organization. The "Puntos de Encuentro con INAMUJER" (Meeting Points with INAMUJER) and "Redes Populares de Usuarías de BANMUJER" (Popular Networks of BANMUJER's clients), are examples of grassroots women organizations supported by INAMUJER and BANMUJER.

Civil and political women rights are fully established in the Bolivarian Constitution. The constitution supports required policies, plans and projects to eliminate those kinds of discrimination that remain in the world due to patriarchal culture.

In November 2000, during the Millennium Summit, Venezuela committed itself to achieve the Millennium Goals. These that involve 50 % of poverty decrease by 2015. Overcoming poverty demands our attention on multiple dimensions and causal relationships. One of the issues immediately assumed by our Government was employment. It was in a time when traditional employment was losing importance faced by new forms of employment such as self-employment. For such purpose, since 1999 the establishment of micro-enterprises was privileged by micro-credits. Then, since 2001, cooperative organizations and its financial support have been favored. For that, in 1999, the "Banco del Pueblo Soberano" (Bank of the the Sovereign People) was opened with its credit line "credimujer". In addition, in 2001, "Banco de Desarrollo de la Mujer" (Women's Development Bank) and

"Fondo de Desarrollo Microfinanciero (FONDEMI)", (Micro-financial Development Fund) were opened; all of these were coordinated with the Public Financial System and more recently with the Ministry of Popular Economy (MINEP) and the Educational Missions.

In regards to the Missions of the Bolivarian Revolution, we would like to mention that they are huge campaigns of universal coverage that are rapidly implemented. A big boost was given to a literacy campaign and to education in all levels (primary, secondary and higher education). In 2005 the Missions, allowed us to declare that our country became a "territory free of illiteracy." The missions allowed to universalize education at all levels, offer health services, create new jobs, enhance food security and sovereignty, restore cultural identity, enhance citizenship and protect persons at high risk. In all these missions the participation of poor women, peasants, indigenous and afro-descendants, from country and town, has been significant. These women have participated not only as users, but also as promoters in each one of these Missions.

For example, we point out, that according to Ministry of Popular Economy data, 63% of the beneficiaries of the educational and jobs' creation campaign Mission, "Misión Vuelvan Caras", are women. They are organized in cooperatives which have received financial support from the public financial system in the period 2004-2005.

With the healthcare mission "Barrio Adentro", women, girls and boys have especially benefited from healthcare. This mission also takes care of pregnant women and their nutrition.

These achievements, briefly explained, are the result of a series of factors: our country lives a revolution that expects to go to the root of the problems, such as underdevelopment, dependency, socio-economical and environmental contradictions, poverty and poverty feminization. Because of that, it is necessary to set up priorities related to these problems. Equally, all our achievements, policies still in development, weaknesses and challenges are related to these problems. We are sure that the ongoing changes are not all what we aspire for, but we are also sure that by joining together with women's efforts around the world we can advance faster.

Numerous special campaigns, such as the social Missions, have been developed in our country in this Millennium. These Missions aspire to cover all national territory, especially remote places where the majority of excluded women live. UNESCO has been witness to one of these Missions, the literacy campaign, in which 59% of the beneficiaries are women. Healthcare organizations around the world have followed our health campaigns that have been implemented in all communities.

The Guaicaipuro Mission was established as a special campaign focused on support aboriginal population (indigenous people) that has about 500,000

inhabitants concentrated in six states. This population has representatives at the National Assembly, by direct election, who have promoted laws such as "Ley de los Pueblos Indígenas" (Law of Indigenous Peoples) in 2005. Also, they have worked on the policy of Territorial Demarcation under responsibility of Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources.

Regarding policies, actions and laws on preventing and protecting women from violence, we have carried out 1,568 workshops with organized women in different places, and with governmental as well as non governmental organizations. More or less 500,000 women have participated in these workshops at a national level. The law on Violence against Women and Family describes the following: organizations that receive violence complaints, cautionary measures that save lives of women victims of violence, the kinds of violence against women, types of penalties to aggressors, and so on. We also have set up a free emergency line, 0800-MUJERES, with permanent attention which has received 17,677 calls and three shelters ("Casas de Abrigo") have been opened for women whose lives are in danger of death because of violence.

We would like to add that we are aware that much more needs to be done. Violence against women is a cultural issue, and it takes time to eradicate it. One of the reasons is that patriarchal values are still present in relationships between men and women.

The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and INAMUJER, are concerned with the issue of people's trafficking, particularly of girls, boys and women, as well as with the issue of prostitution. We know that more job opportunities, education, training, employment, and a better quality of life, a more progressive income distribution system and a the strengthening of cultural identity, work in order to eliminate origin of this social phenomenon. For that purpose, the Ministry of Interior and Justice and INAMUJER, have developed a communicational program. For us, institutionally, the issue of people trading and trafficking is a focal point.

Human Rights is another issue that we still have to work on. But, we can prove that in our country, no former government did what we are doing nowadays in regards to this issue. Our's is an administration with far-reaching policies and programs towards gender equality.

January, 2006