



**Statement by H.E. María del Rocío García Gaytán,
President of the National Women's Institute of Mexico,
on behalf of the Rio Group**

**Fifty-Third Session
of the Commission on the
Status of Women**

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Chairperson,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Rio Group: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Jamaica, representing the Member States of the CARICOM, as well as my own country, Mexico.

On behalf of the Rio Group, let me congratulate you and the rest of the members of the Bureau on your performance during the previous session of this Commission. We are convinced that your leadership will once again result in the successful conclusion of this meeting, and consequently, in continuing the path of advancement towards gender equality and the empowerment of women.

We would also like to thank the Secretary General for his reports, and recognize the value of his recommendations for achieving the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS, a priority topic in this session.

Chairperson,

The world financial crisis has an effect on both, women and men. However, there is a differentiated impact on women, as they participate in economic activities that may be particularly affected by the crisis, even more, in the case of women living in rural and indigenous areas. In this regard, it is of concern the consequences that an eventual decrease in the social policies budget could generate in domestic care-giving duties. For that reason, it is necessary to avoid such a decrease in order not to affect programs that support and promote social and economic opportunities for women as well as gender equality.

It is fundamental to recognize the contribution that women can have in overcoming the crisis; therefore, it is necessary to include them in the dialogue and in the decision-making processes on this subject.

Social integration must be guided by the principles of social justice, diversity and gender equality and by including this vision in the design, definition and implementation of public plans, programs and policies.

In our region, we have advanced in the creation of an institutional framework for our States to consolidate the gender perspective in the institutional duties, especially with its inclusion in public policies, and the inclusion of women at decision-making levels. In addition, the national mechanisms for women have been integrated into subregional fora, such as the Central American Council of Ministers for Women, the Network of Mechanisms for Women for the Andean Region, and the Specialized Meeting on Women of MERCOSUR. These coordination processes have enhanced the strengthening of the agenda on gender in our region, articulated around the Quito Consensus. In that sense, we underscore the close relationship between the achievement of gender equality and the equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women, in the frame of remunerated and non-remunerated work, which is an essential condition for the access of women to full citizenship.

Chairperson,

The Rio Group would like to highlight the XI Regional Conference on Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, which will take place in Brasilia in June of 2010, and which coincides with the tenth anniversary of the Millennium Declaration, the fifteenth anniversary of the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, and the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Platform of Action.

This Regional Conference on Women will take place in the context of the international challenges generated by the financial crisis, but also in the frame of great achievements made by women. For that reason, the topics addressed in the Conference should be articulated around the issue of economic self-sufficiency for women in conditions of equality, in the context of the financial crisis and on its possible impact on gender equality and the empowerment of women. It is also important to address the effects of the world food crisis; official development assistance; employment; income distribution; and familiar co-responsibility; as well as the links between violence and cultural practices that have negative effects on the rights of women.

We are concerned specifically with the scourge of gender violence. While our Governments have advanced in the creation of institutions and of a legal framework for the harmonization process with international standards, as well as with an increase in the assignment of financial resources, the articulation and the complementary nature of regional efforts is still necessary. In that sense, we underscore the importance of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women, "Convention of Belem do Pará", which includes a follow-up mechanism to evaluate its implementation, and the statistical instruments to identify the progress and challenges in its application. For that reason, it is important to complement the efforts in that area in the United Nations Statistics Commission and in the Statistical Commission of the ECLAC.

In the same way, the "*United Nations Secretary-General's Campaign to End Violence against Women*" constitutes an articulating axis that governments, civil society, the private sector, the media, and the United Nations System can implement to eliminate violence against women.

Regarding the reform process of the new gender architecture of the U.N., the Governments of the Rio Group will continue to actively participate in the debates which are taking place in the framework of the General Assembly as part of the analysis of the report of the High-Level Panel on System-wide coherence. In this regard, we welcome the adoption of Resolution 62/277 entitled "System-wide Coherence", during the last session of the General Assembly within the framework for continuing the system-wide coherence process, and with a view to facilitating substantive action by the General Assembly during the sixty-third session. We await for the new detailed modalities requested through that resolution on the different institutional options to strengthen the United Nations work on gender equality and empowerment of women including funding, governance structure, staffing, specific functions and the relationship with this Commission and other relevant bodies, focusing in particular on the "composite entity".

We would like to highlight that during the XLII Meeting of the Governing Board of the Regional Conference on Women, which took place in Santiago, Chile, on 4-5 December last year, the Governments agreed on the importance that this reform process preserves and strengthens the regional dimension that has historically played such an import role in mainstreaming gender perspective in public policies.

Chairperson,

The Rio Group recognizes the importance of accomplishing an equal sharing of care-giving responsibilities between women and men, including in the context of HIV/AIDS, with the purpose of avoiding the perpetuation of a stereotypical perception of men as the support of families and of women as those responsible for care-giving, with the negative consequences this entails for the participation of women in education, in the labor market, and in public life. However, the magnitude of the HIV/AIDS pandemic has made it necessary for all actors; the State, the private sector, civil society, and families, to participate in the assistance relative to those responsibilities.

In that sense, we recognize the positive impact that the assignment of additional resources could have, for example, on the area of social security, housing assistance, in the policies, strategies, programs, and plans of action of Governments. It is also necessary to continue the efforts to strengthen public health services in order to decrease the demand for non-compensated care-giving services from women and girls in the context of HIV/AIDS, particularly in rural and indigenous areas.

We also consider it important to investigate and collect data on gender and age, in order to measure the impact of the progress on the sharing of responsibilities between men and women, including in the context of HIV/AIDS, and to identify the barriers that men must overcome in order to assume additional care-giving responsibilities resulting from certain stereotypes.

Moreover, the Group considers that it is necessary to take additional measures to address the specific needs of girls, young, migrant and indigenous women who are domestic workers and those who perform excessive domestic tasks in their own homes, in order to prevent their exploitation.

Chairperson,

The Group also takes notes with satisfaction of the important role of the International Research and Training Institute for Women (INSTRAW) and welcomes its many initiatives undertaken in various regions. We are convinced that INSTRAW has been successful in stepping up to meet increased demands, and needs our full support in order to continue consolidating such progress. In this regard, the Group is concerned about the delay in appointing the Executive Director of the Institute and strongly urges the Secretary-General to make this appointment promptly in order for the Institute to continue adequately to fulfill its mandate.

Finally, the Rio Group hopes that this session will allow us to identify the areas in which we have not achieved our objectives, and to reflect, as a result of the exchange of experiences and best practices, on the ways and means to address the remaining challenges and continue to create the necessary conditions and transformations to build an authentic culture of irreversible equality and the empowerment of women.