



Sexual violence and child pregnancy in Latin America and the Caribbean: A regional overview

Thursday March 23rd 2017

Hall of the Americas, OAS Headquarters, 17th Street & Constitution Avenue

Since its creation, the Follow-Up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI)¹ has expressed to the States Party² the importance of addressing as a priority the right of women, girls and adolescents to live free from violence and discrimination, expressing special concern over the high rates of sexual violence and its incidence in child and adolescent pregnancy, forced motherhood, and the absence of policies that address this serious situation in an effective way.

In its “Declaration on Violence against Women, Girls, and Adolescents and their Sexual and Reproductive Rights”³ (2014), the Committee of Experts of the MESECVI points out that sexual violence has extremely serious consequences for women, girls and adolescents, and society in general. It also affects their physical and reproductive health, increases the risk of maternal and child mortality, generates high-risk pregnancies and problems during pregnancy such as unsafe abortions, premature births, and fetal suffering, among others. It also generates psychological consequences such as lack of autonomy, fear, depression, distress, post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and a higher risk of suicide.

Moreover, the region broadly recognizes that sexual relations with girls under age 14 are a criminal offense, since validity is denied to the issue of consent. For this reason, for the Committee of Experts all pregnancies in girls under age 14 are considered non-consensual and therefore a product of sexual violence, except among peers.

Faced with this regional reality, the MESECVI prepared a *Hemispheric Report on Sexual Violence and Child Pregnancy in the States Party to the Belém do Pará Convention*,⁴ with a view to providing information on this problematic situation and generating recommendations oriented to improving the efficiency of the measures taken to guarantee the right of girls to live a life free of violence.

The Report, which will be launched during this round-table, addresses the main consequences of sexual violence - child pregnancy, maternal mortality and forced marriages. It highlights the severe situation of maternal mortality among girls aged 10 to 14 – which is the most serious expression of the multiple violations of their human rights - they become pregnant as a result of rape and then die as a result of forced pregnancies maintained by action or omission of the State. The Report concludes with a list of recommendations to States on providing a comprehensive response to this problem.

1. The Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI) is an independent, consensus-based peer evaluation system that looks at the progress made by States Party to the Convention in fulfilling its objectives. More information at: <http://www.oas.org/en/mesecvi/>

2. All the Member States of the Organization of American States, except Canada, Cuba and the USA

3. MESECVI (2014) “Declaration on Violence against Women, Girls, and Adolescents and their Sexual and Reproductive Rights.” Available at: <http://www.oas.org/en/mesecvi/docs/DeclaracionDerechos-EN.pdf>

⁴ MESECVI (2016). Hemispheric Report on Sexual Violence and Child Pregnancy in the States Party to the Belém do Pará Convention. Available at: <http://www.oas.org/en/mesecvi/docs/MESECVI-EmbarazoInfantil-EN.pdf>

Agenda

9:30 Registration

10:00-10:30 Opening remarks

- Carmen Moreno, Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission of Women, OAS
- Michel Pinard, Ambassador, Permanent Observer of France to the OAS

10:30-12:45 Round table on sexual violence and child pregnancy in the States Parties of the Belém do Para Convention

- Diana González-Perrett, President of the Committee of Experts of the MESECVI
- Margaret May Macaulay, Commissioner and Rapporteur on the Rights of Women, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, OAS
- Rosa María Ortiz, ex Commissioner and Rapporteur on the Rights of Children, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, OAS
- Leonel Briozzo, Advisor to the Secretary General, OAS
- Óscar Cabrera, O'Neill Institute, Georgetown University Law School

Moderator: Luz Patricia Mejía Guerrero, Technical Secretary of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI), OAS

Q&A Session

12:45-13:00 Closing remarks

- Jennifer Loten, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the Organization of American States

Register to attend at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sexual-violence-and-child-pregnancy-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-a-regional-overview-tickets-32327670934>

The event will be livestreamed at: http://www.oas.org/en/media_center/webcast_schedule.asp