

MESECVI States Parties approve regional declaration on symbolic violence against women and elect new authorities during the Third Extraordinary Conference.

Washington, DC, September 21, 2023. This Wednesday, September 20, the Third Extraordinary Conference of States Parties to the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, Belém do Pará Convention, concluded with the adoption of a regional declaration in which the States committed to advancing their work on the eradication of gender stereotypes that foster symbolic and political gender-based violence against women. This declaration is a regional milestone as it recognizes symbolic violence as a manifestation of historical discrimination against women.

The virtual gathering brought together the highest authorities responsible for women's issues¹ from the countries comprising the Conference of States Parties (CEP) of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI). As the political body of the MESECVI and one of the four pillars ensuring its functioning, the CEP serves as a forum for country-to-country exchange to advance in the implementation of the Convention.

The meeting began with remarks from Nadine Gasman, President of the National Women's Institute (Inmujeres) of Mexico and the authority in charge of chairing the CEP on behalf of her country since 2020. In her capacity as President of the CEP, she highlighted the work carried out by Mexico during its presidency, particularly the efforts to draft the declaration on gender stereotypes and symbolic violence.

"This declaration is especially important for preventing and eradicating the silent violence that we don't see but that has serious consequences, namely symbolic violence," noted the President of Inmujeres, inviting her counterparts to approve the document.

In the same vein, the Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), Alejandra Mora, and the President of the Committee of Experts of the MESECVI, Marcela Huaita, emphasized the fundamental importance that this declaration will have in ensuring the rights of women and girls in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The text of the *Regional declaration on the eradication of gender stereotypes in public spaces resulting in symbolic and political gender-based violence against women* defines

¹ The Third Extraordinary Conference of States Parties was attended by the Competent National Authorities of Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay.

symbolic violence as: “ the set of messages, values, symbols, icons, signs, and family, educational, ideological, social, economic, political, cultural, aesthetic, and religious impositions that generate, transmit, reproduce and institutionalize, directly or indirectly, inequality, domination and structural discrimination towards women in all their diversity, naturalizing the subordination of them.

This marks the first time that a regionally agreed definition of symbolic violence has been reached, setting an important precedent for the defense of women's right to a life free from violence, in accordance with the standards of the Belém do Pará Convention.

The conference concluded with the election of new CEP authorities. Thus, Chile was elected by acclamation to assume the Presidency of the Conference of States Parties and will host its Ninth Ordinary Conference in June 2024.

The Minister of Women and Gender Equity, Antonia Orellana Guarello, took office on behalf of her country. While highlighting Chile's commitment to promoting the regional gender agenda, she emphasized that "we not only seek to strengthen the CIM/MESECVI to improve the implementation of the Belém do Pará Convention, but also to promote coordination among the States to carry out different actions aimed at promoting a life free of violence for women and girls in the Americas.”

The authorities present also elected Brazil to assume the First Vice Presidency and Peru as the Second Vice Presidency. Additionally, Costa Rica was acclaimed to serve as the rapporteur for the Third Extraordinary Conference.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the importance of continuing to strengthen the MESECVI as a permanent forum for the exchange of experiences, best practices and challenges in advancing the implementation of the Belém do Pará Convention and the realization of a life free of violence for women in the region, was reiterated.