

45 years of the REGIONAL GENDER AGENDA



**Regional Conference
on Women**

in Latin America and the Caribbean
1977–2022

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The commitments adopted by the governments at the sessions of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean are also available through the Regional Gender Agenda libguide [online] <https://www.cepal.org/en/subsidiary-bodies/regional-conference-women-latin-america-and-caribbean/regional-gender-agenda>.

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Foreword

Forty-five years ago, the first Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America was held (Havana, 1977), as an intergovernmental platform for the region following the World Conference of the International Women's Year (Mexico City, 1975). This meeting culminated in the adoption by the governments of the region of the Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development, the region's first road map for active inclusion of women in economic, political, social and cultural life, and increased awareness of the obstacles they faced in improving their circumstances, given multiple inequalities. The governments of the region thus gave the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) a mandate to convene periodically, at intervals of no more than three years, a Regional Conference on Women.¹²

In fulfilment of this mandate, ECLAC has organized 14 Regional Conferences on Women, first through its Women and Development Unit and, subsequently, through its Division for Gender Affairs. Over the past 45 years, the governments gathered at the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean have adopted the commitments that form the Regional Gender Agenda. At present, the Agenda comprises the Regional Programme of Action for Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995–2001 (1994), the Santiago Consensus (1997), the Lima Consensus (2000), the Mexico City Consensus (2004), the Quito Consensus (2007), the Brasilia Consensus (2010), the Santo Domingo Consensus (2013), the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030 (2016) and the Santiago Commitment (2020), which are compiled and presented in this publication.

In 1994 in Mar del Plata (Argentina), the countries adopted the Regional Programme of Action for Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995–2001, in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing in 1995. The Programme contained an updated assessment of the circumstances of women in the region, proposed public policies to reduce equality gaps and included new problems that had not been addressed in the Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development, adopted in Havana. The Regional Programme of Action for Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995–2001 highlighted women's contribution to the democratization processes under way in many of the region's countries and the importance of encouraging a cultural shift to dismantle the patriarchy and the dominant gender system that subordinated, devalued and discriminated against women in various areas.

Subsequent sessions of the Regional Conference focused on discussing and formulating successive consensuses—the Consensus of Santiago (1997), Lima (2000), Mexico City (2004), Quito (2007), Brasilia (2010) and Santo Domingo (2013)—which expressed the political will and commitment to taking decisive steps to protect, respect and ensure all the human rights of women and adolescent and young girls in all their diversity, as well to non-discrimination and gender equality. The consensuses and other commitments adopted by the governments emphasized the importance of strengthening States' institutional frameworks relating to gender, elevating machineries for the advancement of

¹ ECLAC, *Report of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in the Economic and Social Development of Latin America* (E/CEPAL/1042/Rev.1), Havana, 1977.

² Since 1977, there have been 14 meetings of this subsidiary body of ECLAC. The fourteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean was held in coordination with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in Santiago in 2020. The fifteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean will be held in Buenos Aires from 7 to 11 November 2022.

women to the rank of ministries, and the urgent need to assign specific funding to those machineries and to equality policies. They also called on other government and non-governmental stakeholders to contribute to equality policies and mainstream gender. The discussions and proposals on how to end violence against women—including its most extreme form, feminicide—and on sexual and reproductive rights, the inequality and intersectional discrimination women face, gender identities, migration, unpaid work, time use, the right to care, sexual division of labour, new technologies, economic development, women's participation in decision-making, citizenship and parity democracy were significant milestones in terms of both policy and dialogue, and were included and replicated in other international agreements and agendas, including in agendas on population and development and on statistics.

Given the new challenges that came to light during implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—to which the region contributed key gender equality elements—the thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (Montevideo, 2016) marked another milestone when the governments of the region adopted the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030. The Strategy is a tool for overcoming the structural obstacles to gender equality and for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in terms of the gender perspective and women's autonomy and rights in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Regional Agenda was closely interlinked with the global development agenda, to set the course to follow for development with sustainability and gender equality. As a result of this interlinking, ECLAC can proudly state that the Montevideo Strategy is being adapted to national realities and governments are using it to carry out assessments, identify priorities and formulate public policies for gender equality as part of their sustainable development strategies for the period through to 2030.

The Regional Gender Agenda has been constantly strengthened by contributions from governments and women's and feminist movements. In 2020, at the fourteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, organized for the first time in conjunction with UN-Women, governments adopted the Santiago Commitment, which includes commitments to respond in a forward-looking and innovative manner to the emerging challenges that women face in changing economic, demographic, climatic and technological circumstances. In addition, in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the governments agreed to implement “gender-sensitive countercyclical policies, in order to mitigate the impact of economic crises and recessions on women's lives and promote regulatory frameworks and policies to galvanize the economy in key sectors, including the care economy” (Santiago Commitment, para. 24). Even before the outbreak of the pandemic, the Regional Gender Agenda had made it clear that care work was key to the well-being of societies and contributed to economic and social development and, crucially, it had raised awareness of the contribution that women make to the sustainability of life through care work.

Over the past 45 years, the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean has become the main regional intergovernmental forum on women's rights and gender equality within the United Nations system, resulting in a meaningful, progressive and comprehensive Regional Gender Agenda, cementing the region's position as the only one in the world with an Agenda that guides countries' public policies for gender equality in law and in practice, ensuring women's rights and autonomy.

Civil society organizations, and particularly women's and feminist movements and organizations, academic institutions, intergovernmental agencies and cooperation agencies, actively participate in sessions of the Conference. It also benefits from the support of the United Nations system and, in particular, UN-Women, a strategic partner since the fourteenth session of the Regional Conference.

The Regional Gender Agenda, now in its forty-fifth year, is ever evolving, strengthened and complemented by and interlinked with the obligations assumed by States. These obligations include, at the global level, those in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and at the regional level those in the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará) and the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement), in addition to the obligations arising from other global and regional treaties, agreements and conventions. Through the commitments in the Regional Gender Agenda, Latin America and the Caribbean contributes to global discussions, especially in the sessions of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

The Regional Gender Agenda draws on the capacities, strength and creativity of women in Latin America and the Caribbean and their organizations, which have forged ahead whether during periods of dictatorship, restored democracy, neoliberalism, economic growth, crisis or war. Women have succeeded in overcoming those obstacles, organizing and building a regional perspective, while also participating actively in global discussions and making themselves heard beyond the region, striving to push the boundaries of what is possible.

ECLAC is convinced that for equality to truly be achieved as a goal of development, there must be more than distributive equality and that gender equality and sustainability must be at the centre. The Regional Gender Agenda reflects this thinking because it recognizes women's rights and equality as key cross-cutting components of all government efforts to strengthen democracy and pursue inclusive and sustainable development. This is particularly important in the context of the prolonged crisis and uneven recovery the region is facing, with new sources of uncertainty emerging from global developments. It is against this backdrop that the fifteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean will be held in Buenos Aires from 7 to 11 November 2022, with discussions centring around the subject of "The care society: a horizon for sustainable recovery with gender equality".

This report is a contribution to implementation of the commitments assumed. It compiles the agreements adopted by governments at the sessions of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, and is a tool for consultation, but above all for action and construction of a future based on the collective memory of the women of Latin America and the Caribbean and of the care society; a future of sustainable development with equality and sustainability of life as principles to drive the change of era sought by the region.

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