

A CALL TO ACTION **TO BOOST** **WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP** *and Parity Democracy in the Americas*



INTER-AMERICAN
taskFORCE
On Women's Leadership

With the support of
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Inter-American Task Force on Women's Leadership

During the VIII Summit of the Americas (Peru, April 2018), the leaders of the Americas approved the creation of the Inter-American Task Force on Women's Leadership, committing to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women through greater cooperation and synergies between institutions that promote women's leadership in the Americas and the Caribbean. Thirteen international and Inter-American institutions with recognized experience and programming in areas related to women's leadership are involved: the Organization of American States, through the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), ParlAmericas, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), CAF - Development Bank of Latin America, the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB), IDEA International, together with two civil society organizations: Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL) and the Committee of Latin America and the Caribbean for the Defense of Women's Rights (CLADEM).

A CALL TO ACTION TO BOOST WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND PARITY DEMOCRACY IN THE AMERICAS

This publication is an initiative of the partner institutions of the Inter-American Task Force on Women's Leadership

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"The opinions expressed, arguments used, and policy recommendations do not necessarily reflect the official point of view of the executive boards nor the Member States that are part of each of the partner institutions of the Inter-American Task Force on Women's Leadership."

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INTRODUCTION





he Ninth Summit of the Americas, “Building a Sustainable, Resilient, and Equitable Future,” represents an extraordinary opportunity for accountability to deliver on the commitments made at

the Eighth Summit of the Americas, promoting women’s leadership and dialogue and mobilizing the action of governments and broad sectors of society in the face of regional challenges, including recovery from the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the strengthening of democratic governance, among others.

Women’s leadership constitutes a crosscutting element in all discussions. However, it is particularly relevant to governance since the participation of women in decision-making spaces is essential for democracy, sustainable development and the region’s recovery.

States have obligations and commitments to women’s human rights, assumed in international human rights instruments and the agreements adopted by different world and regional conferences, including the last Summit of the Americas and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Although it is possible to highlight major milestones in recognizing and guaranteeing women’s human rights and increasing their representation in different spheres in the Americas, women’s parity and substantive equality and autonomy remain a major challenge.

The region has undergone significant social and political instability since the last Lima Summit held in 2018, which, together with the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to a slowdown in economic growth and a multidimensional crisis. Several countries have faced demonstrations or protests in the light of deteriorating living conditions and the pressures created by the pandemic. Some have suffered attacks on their democratic systems, while others face serious threats and public security crises, indicating the need to redouble efforts to achieve peace, prosperity and equality in the region. International and regional organizations, with special emphasis on those comprising the [Inter-American Task Force on Women’s Leadership](#), as well as the feminist and women’s movement, have highlighted that the presence of women in key decision-making spaces is essential to ensuring that the response and recovery from these crises are sustainable and do not deepen

pre-existing gaps¹. They have also stressed that the achievement of women’s rights and the participation of women in decision-making processes are fundamental to democratic governance. The aspiration is to achieve a “parity democracy”² in which substantive equality and parity between men and women become the backbone of the transformations promoted by inclusive States³.

This document, developed jointly by the 13 institutions composing the Inter-American Task Force on Women’s Leadership, seeks to contribute to these reflections and call for action to promote women’s leadership and parity democracy in the Americas.

¹ UN Women, 2020. IACHR, 2020. CIM/OAS, 2020.

² The English translation of “democracia paritaria,” which refers to democracy with parity.

³ Regulatory Framework to Consolidate Parity Democracy.

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL CONVENTIONS AND COMMITMENTS





omen’s participation in decision-making enjoys a broad legal and normative political staging. States have approved various agreements in the region to recognize women's political rights. Each agreement has greater specificity and depth from the logic of the progressiveness of human rights.

MAIN AGREEMENTS AND COMMITMENTS ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING, LEADERSHIP AND PARITY

▶ Inter-American Convention on the Granting of Civil Rights to Women (1948)	<i>“The American States agree to grant women the same civil rights that men enjoy” (OAS, 1948, Article 1).</i>
▶ Convention on the Political Rights of Women adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations (1953).	<i>“Women shall be entitled to hold public office and exercise all public functions, established by national law, on equal terms with men, without any discrimination” (United Nations, 1952, Article. III).</i>
▶ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979).	<i>“States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country” (United Nations, 1979, Article 7).</i>
▶ Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, Belém do Pará Convention (1994).	<i>“Every woman has the right to the recognition, enjoyment, exercise and protection of all human rights and freedoms embodied in regional and international human rights instruments. These rights include, among others: (...) The right to have equal access to the public service of her country and to take part in the conduct of public affairs, including decision-making” (OAS, 1994, Article 4j).</i>
▶ Miami Plan of Action of the First Summit of the Americas of the OAS (1994).	<i>“Strengthen policies and programs that improve and broaden the participation of women in all spheres of political, social, and economic life” (OAS, 1994, subsection 18 para. 1).</i>

▶ Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (1995).	<i>“Commit to establishing the goal of gender balance in governmental bodies and committees, as well as in public administrative entities and the judiciary (...) to substantially increase the number of women to achieve equal representation of women and men, through positive action if necessary in all governmental and public administration positions” (United Nations, 1995, section 190 a).</i>
▶ Plan of Action of Quebec. Third Summit of the Americas (2001)	<i>“They [States] will promote gender equity and equality and women’s human rights”</i>
▶ Inter-American Democratic Charter. Twenty-Eighth Special Session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (2001)	<i>“States shall promote the full and equal participation of women in the political structures of their countries as a fundamental element in the promotion and exercise of a democratic culture” (OAS, 2001, Article 28).</i>
▶ Quito Consensus. Tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC 2007)	<i>“Adopt positive action measures, and all mechanisms necessary, including legislative reforms and budget allocations to ensure the full participation of women in public positions and political representation in all branches of government, to consolidate parity (...)” (ECLAC, 2007, para. 1.ii).</i>
▶ Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain, adopted by the Fifth Summit of the Americas of the OAS (2009)	<i>“(…). We will promote the full and equal participation of women in political life and decision-making structures in our countries, at all levels, through laws and public policies that promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms of the women, equality, equity and gender parity” (OAS, 2009, section 11).</i>
▶ Brasilia Consensus. Eleventh Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2010)	<i>“To increase and enhance opportunities for the equal participation of women in making and implementing policies in all spheres of public authority” (ECLAC, 2010, para. 3.a).</i>

► Declaration of Asuncion. Twenty-First Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government (SEGIB 2011)	<i>“Adopt the necessary measures to promote gender parity in all powers and levels of public service administration and increase and reinforce their full participation in public policy life cycles” (SEGIB, 2011, para. 25).</i>
► Santo Domingo Consensus. Twelfth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (2013)	<i>“Strengthen the participation of women on equal terms with men, adopting and applying laws that ensure equal representation in decision-making spaces, promoting affirmative measures of inclusion, both in political parties and in other institutions of democratic life, of the public or private sphere, and establishing mechanisms to punish non-compliance with the laws in this regard” (ECLAC, 2013, para. 102).</i>
► Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the Seventieth Session of the United Nations General Assembly (2015)	<i>“Ensure the full and effective participation of women and equal opportunities for leadership at all decision-making levels in political, economic and public life” (United Nations, 2015, Sustainable Development Goal 5.5).</i>
► Montevideo Strategy. Thirteenth Eleventh Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC 2016)	<i>“Establish mechanisms that guarantee the equal diversity and inclusion of women in public power of popular election and appointment in all State functions and levels” (ECLAC, 2017, measure 3.b).</i>
► Lima Commitment of the Eighth Summit of the Americas of the Organization of the American States (2018)	<i>“Taking action such that follow-up measures stemming from the Lima Commitment promote the advancement of gender equity and equality and women’s empowerment in the Hemisphere” (OAS, 2018, agreement 55).</i>
► Declaration of Santo Domingo. Thirty-Eighth Assembly of Delegates of the Inter-American Commission of Women (2019)	<i>“Promote and strengthen women’s leadership in strategic decision-making spaces in State entities and levels of government considering that all public policies should consider the entire population’s perspective” (CIM/OAS, 2019, section 9).</i>

► Santiago Commitment. Fourteenth Session of the Regional Conference Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC 2020)	<i>“Encourage sustained efforts to increase the representation of women, including women with disabilities, in decision-making processes in order to achieve parity democracy, with an intercultural and ethnic-racial approach (...)” (ECLAC, 2020, para. 12).</i>
► Andorra Declaration Twenty-seventh Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government (SEGIB 2021)	<i>“Support multilateral efforts, the effectiveness of cooperation, and the impact of inter-institutional actions to promote women’s leadership and equal participation at all decision-making levels, particularly at the local level, to provide more inclusive, plural and representative answers in mitigating the crisis and achieving the SDGs” (SEGIB, 2021, para. 51).</i>
► Agreed conclusions of the Sixty-Fifth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women of the United Nations (2021)	<i>“Adopt measures to achieve the equal and meaningful participation of women and equal opportunities for leadership at all decision-making levels in political, economic, social and cultural life, and eliminate all structural barriers, including legal, institutional, economic, social and cultural barriers that prevent the participation of women and girls” (United Nations, 2021, para. 61, section e).</i>

WHY WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION



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