



Organization of  
American States



**REMARKS DELIVERED BY**  
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**FOURTH MEETING OF MINISTERS OR OF THE HIGHEST-RANKING  
AUTHORITIES RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN  
THE MEMBER STATES (REMIM IV)**

November 1, 2011  
San Salvador, El Salvador

Madam Chair  
Honorable Ministers  
Amb. Carmen Moreno, Executive Secretary, CIM  
Distinguished Delegates

It is an honor for me to join you today at this the Fourth Meeting of Ministers or of the Highest-Ranking Authorities responsible for the Advancement of Women in the Member States. I am particularly pleased to have the opportunity to address such a distinguished gathering of female leaders with respect to the upcoming Sixth Summit of the Americas that will take place on April 14-15, 2012 in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia.

Almost exactly three years after the Port of Spain Summit, the Hemisphere's 34 Presidents and Prime Ministers will meet in Cartagena, Colombia to address issues of priority, and lay out their vision for an inter-American agenda of partnership and cooperation as reflected in the Summit's central theme, "Connecting the Americas: Partners for Prosperity."

Under this umbrella are six thematic areas that are currently being considered and negotiated by Member States. They are natural disasters, poverty and inequality, access to technology, citizen security, physical integration and regional cooperation. These six sub-themes each treat issues of hemispheric priority and each of these themes, in some way, reflect the importance of partnership in confronting the challenges of the hemisphere and for capitalizing on opportunities for progress.

In laying out a forward-looking hemispheric agenda, I believe, like you, that the issue of gender cannot be given short shrift. Women make up approximately half of the population of the Americas. It is now widely accepted that women play an essential role in the success and sustainability of development initiatives and poverty alleviation efforts. Women play a critical role in efforts to wage peace, strengthen our democracies, safeguard human rights and build our communities.

At the First Summit of the Americas in Miami in 1994, Heads of State and Government underscored the importance of strengthening the role of women in all aspects of political, social and economic life in the countries of the Americas, and indicated that the role of women is essential to reducing poverty and social inequalities and to enhance democracy and development. Since then, each Summit has underscored the importance of gender.

Most recently, at the 2009 Summit of the Americas, Heads of State and Government of our Hemisphere committed to strengthening institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women and to encourage “the full and equal

participation of women in the political life and decision-making structures of our countries at all levels.”

I believe that the CIM, from its creation in 1928 and through its groundbreaking work that continues today, has contributed to the evolution in understanding of the role of women and has played a key role in gaining support for women’s full participation in public life, including at the highest levels of government.

The Sixth Summit of the Americas will mark the first such meeting where four Member States will be represented by female Heads of State or Government – President Cristina Kirchner of Argentina, President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil, President Laura Chinchilla of Costa Rica, and Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar of Trinidad & Tobago. The face of leadership in the Americas is changing.

Ministerial meetings, like this one, play an integral role in the preparation of the Summit. In the preparatory stage, at the front end, Ministerial-level recommendations often find resonance in the decisions adopted by Heads. In the implementation stage post-Summit, Ministerial processes form part of the critical infrastructure for the follow up and implementation of Summit mandates and initiatives.

Starting at the Third Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in 2001, our Heads of State and Government have explicitly committed to forging greater linkages between the Ministerial and Summit processes. That remains a work in progress.

But we believe, based on feedback from member states, that support for strengthening these linkages is perhaps stronger now than it has ever been. In the Summits Secretariat, we are making a concerted effort to work with CIM and other areas within the OAS, as well as partner institutions of the Joint Summit Working Group to begin to consolidate a Summit architecture that clarifies and reinforces the relationship between the various inter-American processes and the Summit.

That commitment is reflected in a decision recently adopted by the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG) that is important for your deliberations. The SIRG, which is comprised of the 34 Member States and represents the negotiating body for the Summit is now meeting every few weeks to negotiate the documents that Heads will sign in Cartagena. I am pleased to share with you that the SIRG took a unanimous decision to invite the Chair of this Ministerial (and others occurring in the coming months) to engage that negotiating body directly. Ministerial Chairs are therefore being invited to report to the SIRG on recommendations that may emerge from these meetings that relate to the thematic areas of the Summit so that they may be duly considered during negotiations. This new mechanism offers the opportunity for broader and more representative input into the process during the stage of preparation where it can make a difference. As such, we look forward to receiving the pertinent recommendations from this Ministerial at the next meeting of the SIRG on November 7. I know you will make the most of that opportunity.

I would also like to share with you some additional mechanisms for participation in the Summit process. In order to make the Summit process as inclusive as possible,

the Summits Secretariat has been working with Member States to broaden and deepen direct engagement with the general public in our 34 countries. To this end, we have organized and activated a range of mechanisms to provide opportunities to listen to the voices of the peoples of the Americas. I will briefly mention two of these.

The first is what we have called Summit Talk, an online forum and discussion group that is hosted on the Summits Virtual Community. The online forum is moderated by thematic experts who help to guide the discussions, draw out ideas and develop substantive recommendations based on the range of inputs. I would invite you to join the Summits Virtual Community and be a contributor to the discussions or, if you prefer, just to see the rich diversity of ideas that come from all parts of the hemisphere, from individuals of different socio-economic, political and disciplinary backgrounds and age groups.

In this regard, I am pleased to share with you that the Summits Secretariat has worked in close coordination with the Executive Secretariat of the Inter-American Commission of Women to facilitate a series of hemispheric virtual consultations. The most recent consultation, "Connecting the Women of the Americas: Partners for Prosperity", took place from October 3<sup>rd</sup> through 28<sup>th</sup>, with 150 participants from 23 Member States taking advantage of this opportunity to discuss the main theme and sub-topics of the Sixth Summit.

Secondly, the Summits Secretariat is organizing monthly Experts Roundtables, an open forum in which subject experts can present and debate their perspectives on

individual Summit themes, and respond to questions from both onsite and virtual audiences. I wish to take this opportunity to invite and encourage those here present to contribute their knowledge, expertise and experience, and to be a part of these discussions.

We believe that these consultations play an important role. They generate ideas and recommendations for consideration by Member States, they help to raise awareness among the publics of our countries regarding the Summit issues and they give the citizens of the Americas a stake in the process by providing a space for participation. Our slogan on the Summits Virtual Community is “Be part of the dialogue, be heard” and we are hearing from the people of the Americas.

We look forward to hearing your voice, having your substantive input and benefiting from a gender perspective throughout this process.

Thank you.