



**PARLIAMENTARY CONFEDERATION OF THE AMERICAS  
7TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
QUITO, ECUADOR, MAY 29 TO JUNE 3, 2006**

**Committee on Health and Social Protection**

**Recommendation on Sexual and Reproductive Rights**

**WHEREAS** sexual and reproductive health problems are the leading cause of illness and mortality among women worldwide, with over half a million dying each year from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth;

**WHEREAS** millions of women do not have access to adequate sexual and reproductive health services, contraception, or family planning methods;

**WHEREAS** reproductive health and sexual and reproductive rights are a fundamental part of personal development and harmonious intimate and family relationships;

**WHEREAS** universal access to healthcare, and to reproductive healthcare in particular, including family planning, is the basis for good maternal health and plays a key role in reducing poverty;

**WHEREAS** improving the sexual and reproductive health of women has a direct impact on the reduction of perinatal and infant mortality rates;

**WHEREAS** poverty reduction, gender equality, improved maternal health, the reduction of mortality among children under the age of 5, and the eradication of HIV/AIDS are among the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs) adopted in September 2000 by the heads of state and government of 191 countries gathered at United Nations headquarters for the Millennium Summit;

**WHEREAS** these heads of state and government committed to reaching the MDGs by 2015 and reaffirmed the importance of ensuring universal access to reproductive healthcare at the World Summit in September 2005;

**WHEREAS** Article 12 of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW), which was ratified by the vast majority of states in the Americas, stipulates that

- 1) “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of healthcare in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to healthcare services, including those related to family planning,” and that
- 2) “Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1 of this article, States Parties shall ensure to women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement, and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation;”

**WE, the representatives of the congresses and parliamentary assemblies of the unitary, federal, federated, and associated states, regional parliaments, and interparliamentary organizations gathered in Quito, Ecuador, for the 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas:**

**UNDERTAKE TO** pay special attention to the issue of sexual and reproductive rights;

**UNDERTAKE TO** promote legislation and policies, and the implementation of related programs, that focus on public health, specifically the health of adolescents and children, notably by allowing enhanced access to family planning and promoting condom use as a means to help prevent sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS, and unwanted pregnancies;

**URGE** our governments to include in their sexual and reproductive health policies provisions to ensure the availability and accessibility of emergency contraception programs and guarantee that the appropriate information and methods are provided through the healthcare system and services for women who are victims of violence;

**UNDERTAKE TO** work toward reforming and strengthening our respective healthcare systems so that our citizens, including aboriginal communities and people of African descent, enjoy universally accessible, non-discriminatory, good quality services;

**ENCOURAGE** our governments to launch awareness campaigns so that people in urban and rural areas alike have access to the information and methods they need to avoid exposing themselves to sexual and reproductive health risks, and so that men and adolescents in particular be made aware of the importance of sexual rights and their own responsibility in the matter;

**URGE** our governments to allocate sufficient financial resources to ensure universal access to preventive services and care in the area of sexual and reproductive health, particularly for people living in rural areas;

**URGE** our heads of state and government to respect the commitments of the *Millennium Development Goals*;

**URGE** our governments to go beyond the provisions of CEDAW Article 12.2 and offer free services around the clock, and not simply when required;

**AGREE** to promote within our countries' parliaments and social organizations the recommendations contained in the *Bahia Declaration* adopted on April 22, 2006;

**URGE** the member parliaments of COPA to modify without delay their countries' constitution and legislation to include explicit recognition of the fundamental rights of women, including the right to terminate pregnancy, at least when it poses a risk to a woman's life or is the result of rape;

**RECOMMEND** to all parliamentarians attending the 7<sup>th</sup> COPA General Assembly in Quito, Ecuador, and particularly to the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, that they follow up on this recommendation with all the parliamentary assemblies of the Americas and the committees tasked with examining issues of health and gender equality to ensure they pay proper attention to issues of sexual and reproductive health.