

Organization of American States



The Organization of American States is a regional agency of the United Nations. On April 30, 1948, 21 nations of the hemisphere met in Bogotá, Colombia, to adopt the Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS), which affirmed their commitment to common goals and respect for each nation's sovereignty. Since then, the OAS has expanded to include the nations of the Caribbean, as well as Canada.

The OAS accepted the National Council of Women of Canada as a participating Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in 2001. At present, NCWC is in correspondence with Carmen Lomellin, the Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission of Women (known by its Spanish acronym CIM). NCWC is supporting the efforts of CIM to ensure that in the deliberations and plans for action undertaken by the OAS, the gender perspective will be incorporated and used.

The Inter-American Program on the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality was endorsed in April 2001 by the hemisphere's presidents and prime ministers at the Third Summit of the Americas. The program calls on governments to strengthen national institutions responsible for women's development, adopt public policies aimed at promoting fairness, bring national legal institutions in line with international conventions, and improve women's access to justice, among other steps.

The OAS and other multilateral organizations, for their part, are asked to incorporate a gender perspective throughout the inter-American system, ensure greater participation of women in decision-making, and strengthen the Inter-American Commission of Women. The program also urges civil society organizations to work closely on women's rights issues with government agencies, conduct research on the status of women, and examine ways to promote the rights of girls and women in schools.

The Inter-American Program was developed by the CIM and fine-tuned in April 2000, at the first-ever ministerial-level meeting of ministers and other top government officials who formulate policies on the advancement of women. The OAS General Assembly adopted the Inter-American Program in June 2000 in Windsor, Canada.