



**Speech of the President of the Central-American Parliament, Honorable Member of Parliament Fanny Salinas at the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament in Vienna, September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021.**

4th motion, September 8th, 2021: „Repealing laws that discriminate against women and girls is a way to achieve conditions of gender equality“

Honorable Member of Parliament Duarte Pacheco  
President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)  
Honorable Member of Parliament Wolfgang Sobotka  
President of the Austrian National Council  
Your Excellencies Presidents of the Member Parliaments of the IPU  
Distinguished guests:

It is an honor for me to convey a greeting of solidarity on behalf of the Central American Parliament, the which is made up of six states and brings together 120 directly and universally elected Members of Parliament as legitimate representatives of the peoples of the Isthmic and Insular Central America. I want to thank Austria and the Austrian National Council for their hospitality, as well as the IPU for the invitation and the organizational work for this Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament.

In the few minutes available I want to underline what is related to Latin America on the subject of this session:

It is urgent to advance in the fight against laws that discriminate against women and girls, to eliminate ambiguities in current legislation and in the application of law and to combat institutional violence against women and girls. We have to take the great leap of moving from words to deeds, removing outdated laws and making sure that legislation favorable to gender equality is applied in reality.

It is also necessary to analyze that the legislation in many countries is deficient. We need a precise legislation for the protection of women and girls. It must be legally established that a “no” is a “no” in case of rape and sexual harassment against women and girls. It is a priority to increase the sentences for femicide and sexual abuse and to empower the judicial system to effectively prosecute these crimes. The compensation of physical and psychological damage must be highly favorable to the victims. We cannot wait any longer for a just legislation that is also applied in reality. We must act now.

We must work hard, so that the laws protecting the rights of women and girls do not remain in theory and on paper only. It is necessary to create the concrete mechanisms to actually apply these laws. In some cases we are faced with outdated legislation and laws, and in others with modern law, which are however not applied. That must end.

We have to eliminate the criminalization of abortion, which in some Latin American countries is still a "crime" in all cases and prohibited in most cases. Further, forced sterilizations, poor health

care, and limited access to justice and compensation for abuses play a role. Unfortunately, I have to highlight some sad records of Latin America and the Caribbean in terms of sexual and reproductive health: more than half of pregnancies are unplanned, a percentage that has remained unchanged since 1985, and according to estimates, it is the region of the world with the highest percentage of unsafe abortions.

Each government needs to allocate the necessary budget to make gender equality a reality and the parliaments have to remain vigilant so that the necessary resources are approved. We have to eliminate laws that appear to open up the participation of women in public life, but in reality, they are “fobbed off” with positions of substitutes in parliaments or of deputy directors in companies or vice ministers in governments. We also have to achieve political and economic parity.

It is very important to give prior attention to the most vulnerable women such as poor women and/or single mothers, indigenous women, Afro-descendants, women with special needs and those who suffer double discrimination due to their condition of being part of one or more of these vulnerable groups. Legislation is required that includes all these vulnerable groups in order to protect them and to open opportunities for humane development for all of them and their children.

Thank you very much