



REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Regional Meeting Transformative Leadership and Inclusive Democracy:

Inspiring experiences
and key agreements for equality



Report and Recommendations from Regional Meeting: Transformative Leadership and Inclusive Democracy

Central Theme:

Club de Madrid organized a regional meeting in Montevideo, Uruguay, titled “Transformative Leadership and Inclusive Democracy” at the Spanish Cooperation Training Center (AECID). This meeting gathered leaders from Latin America and Spain, and experts from international organizations to share strategies and experiences to promote inclusive, violence-free democracies.

Political women, senators, representatives, mayors, and ministers, participated with the commitment to advance substantive equality in decision making spaces. During the meeting, various historical and structural barriers that hinder equal political participation were identified, and concrete experiences of political parity and inclusive governments were shared, addressing the challenges women face at all levels of representation, and the strategies used to overcome them.

I. The Context of Inequality and the Anti-Rights Counteroffensive

The meeting focused on the situation of women's political participation in Latin America, identifying persistent barriers and exploring strategic commitments to strengthen inclusive and gender-equal democracy in the region. The discussion was guided by the conviction that without gender equality, there is no democracy.

Despite the progress achieved, the region faces a highly complex context characterized by overlapping crises that erode human development and the quality of democracy. The challenges have been exacerbated by the emergence of two interconnected phenomena:

1. *The persistence of structural inequality:* No country has achieved substantive equality despite advances in formal equality (via laws and quotas). Inequality remains deeply rooted in misogyny, racism, and xenophobia.

2. *The Anti-Rights Ideological Counteroffensive:* There is a strong reaction from extremists seeking to block concepts such as “rights” and “gender” in official documents and to promote reactionary narratives. This backlash is essentially directed against feminism, seen as the movement that has most transformed recent history by exposing the historical distribution of power (patriarchy).

Democracy itself is under pressure. Although it remains the preferred form of government for a majority in the region, there is widespread dissatisfaction with its outcomes. Democracy’s failure to resolve persistent issues such as poverty, inequality, and complex insecurity (associated with organized crime) is leading citizens, including younger generations, to view authoritarian models as more effective.

II. The Structural Knots of Inequality (Conceptual Framework)

Four structural knots have been identified that the region must untie in order to achieve substantive equality:

1. **Socioeconomic Inequality:** Only half of women participate in the labor market, compared to 75% of men. 24% of women lack their own income—14% more than men. Although poverty has been reduced, the feminization of poverty persists.
2. **Sexual Division of Labor (The Main Knot):** Women dedicate three times more time than men to unpaid domestic and care work. This unpaid labor contributes between 19% and 27% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in countries that measure it, demonstrating that women sustain development and the economy at the cost of their own work. This overload is the main obstacle to women’s full participation.
3. **Discriminatory and Violent Cultural Patterns:** Gender-based violence is the most widespread violation of human rights. The region records at least 11 femicides per day. Political violence is used as a weapon to discipline, delegitimize, and suppress dissent, which in some contexts is predominantly female.

4. Concentration of Power: Despite regulatory advances in parity and quotas, representation remains insufficient. Only 36% of parliamentary seats are held by women. The situation is even worse at the local government level, where representation in executive positions (mayorships) is low.

III. Overcoming Political Violence and Resistance

Gendered political violence, especially in the digital space, was identified as the most critical barrier threatening women's permanence in public life and corroding democratic quality.

A. Characteristics and Consequences of Violence

- **Violence as a Political Weapon:** Violence against women leaders is not spontaneous; it results from an organized “machinery” that deploys narratives using all available resources. Its goal is to “despair, delegitimize, and silence dissent.”
- **Targeted and Sexualized Harassment:** Digital violence is qualitatively different for women. It focuses on undermining their abilities, is sexualized (mocking their appearance and exposing private lives), and institutional attacks often question women’s sanity, attempting to subject them to psychological evaluations to suspend them from office.
- **High Personal Cost and Isolation:** Facing this violence carries a heavy personal and family toll, including emotional harm to women leaders and their families. Women often face this struggle “in great solitude.” Studies confirm this lack of support, showing that in some countries up to 90% of digital violence victims received no backing from their political parties.

B. Structural Resistance of Political Parties and Institutions

Political parties were identified as critical obstacles to gender parity. *Machista* and patriarchal structures employ “tricks” to evade equitable representation, such as placing men at the top of electoral lists or avoiding substantive parity in executive positions.

It is crucial to strengthen state institutions (including electoral tribunals, prosecutors’ offices, and oversight bodies) so that they are resilient to political

cycles and act effectively. If progress translates only into “paper policies,” the justice system and protection mechanisms fail to safeguard victims.

IV. Concrete Recommendations for Substantive Equality

Achieving substantive equality requires a comprehensive strategy grounded in transforming the rules of the game, ensuring adequate resources, driving cultural change, and sustaining constant political mobilization.

A. Recommendations on Legal and Institutional Reforms

1. Move Toward Substantive and Transformative Parity: It is necessary to go beyond quotas and move toward models of mandatory constitutional parity (“Parity in Everything”), ensuring representation at all levels and across all branches of government. This includes expanding affirmative action mechanisms to local executive positions (such as mayors and governors), where women’s representation remains low.

2. Ensure Implementation and Sanction: Parity and quota laws require effective implementation and monitoring systems. It is crucial to apply penalties or sanctions (for example, refusing to register noncompliant candidate lists) when regulations are not followed, as political parties often seek loopholes to evade them.

3. Robust Institutionalization through Rights-Based Laws: Equality policies must be translated into Rights Laws with effective legal protection and guarantees. Institutions must be strong, well-resourced, and staffed with specialized professionals to ensure mainstreaming and long-term continuity beyond political cycles.

4. Strengthen Specialized Legislative Mechanisms: Regional experience shows the effectiveness of creating specialized, multi-party gender commissions within parliaments. These commissions accelerate the processing of equality bills and prevent them from being sidelined in other committees.

5. Address Political Violence Holistically: It is a priority to update legal frameworks to address digital violence with a gender, intersectional, and human rights perspective. Institutional mechanisms must be established to ensure the rapid and effective removal of violent content. Additionally, law

enforcement and judicial personnel must be trained in the collection and evaluation of digital evidence.

B. Recommendations on the Care Society Paradigm

1. Recognize Care as a Human Right and State Obligation: The Care Society paradigm must prioritize the sustainability of life and the care of people and the planet. Care is both a human right and a state obligation, as well as a shared responsibility among men, women, families, and the private sector.

2. Financing as a Critical Investment: The gender equality agenda is chronically underfunded. It is essential to mobilize international, regional, and local financial resources for comprehensive care systems. Investment in care must be understood as a strategic social investment, not merely an expense, demonstrating its contribution to GDP.

3. Cross-Cutting Budgets and Progressive Taxation: It is crucial to bring the gender perspective into central debates on finance, climate, and productive transformation, where major investments are decided. Progressive fiscal policies should be promoted, and cross-cutting budget annexes dedicated to care should be established, as exemplified by one country in the region that allocates 1% of its GDP to this purpose.

4. Promote Male Co-Responsibility: Women's full participation requires the massive involvement of men in caregiving and child-rearing tasks. It is essential to promote family and social co-responsibility through laws and policies that challenge and transform gender stereotypes.

5. Reinterpret Existing Norms: New laws are not always necessary; existing general norms can be reinterpreted in light of the right to care. Examples include allowing reimbursement of minor care-related expenses (for children or dependents) during political campaigns.

C. Recommendations on Political Mobilization and Narrative

1. Build Cross-Cutting Alliances (Sorority): Alliances among women must transcend ideological divisions (right, center, left) and be based on integrity, honesty, and decency to stand against authoritarianism and corruption.

2. Strengthen Support and Sorority Networks: It is essential to build networks of support and solidarity to confront the loneliness of political life and sustain leadership. A concrete proposal to address digital violence is to create

regional platforms or chat groups for women leaders to collectively report abuse.

3. Feminize Politics and Change the Narrative: Leadership should be collaborative and contrast with confrontational masculine styles. Progressive movements must build a new, creative narrative that not only appeals to reason but also addresses the emotions and perceptions of people who feel abandoned by politics. The goal is not to seek privileges, but equal rights and opportunities.

4. Build Women's Own Political Power: Women must build their own political strength, with a female identity and face, to achieve their goals without being used as "objects" or "tokens" by traditional political forces.

5. "More Territory, Less Desk" Strategy: The local sphere is strategic, as this is where structural barriers are most deeply rooted. It is essential to maintain close proximity to citizens and to work directly in communities to transform people's lives.

D. Recommendations on Culture, Data, and Multilateralism

1. Cultural Transformation through Education: The most complex change is the transformation of cultural and social norms. This requires constant political education, including the revision of school textbooks and the use of popular culture (series, film) to challenge and change stereotypical models and roles.

2. Generate Solid and Anti-Racist Evidence: It is necessary to break the statistical silence and produce solid, comparable, and actionable data for political decision-making. Analyses must be conducted from an intersectional and anti-racist perspective, promoting diversity in race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and origin.

3. Use Multilateralism as a Lever: International frameworks (Beijing Platform, SDGs, and CEDAW General Recommendation No. 40) are powerful tools to legitimize demands, set standards, and claim rights at national and local levels. It is crucial that legal departments use international treaties and resolutions to legitimize claims and push for the transformation of judicial systems.

4. Engage Regional Justice Mechanisms: In light of the failure of national and multilateral mechanisms, it is recommended to engage higher-level bodies such as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to sanction governments that are complicit in or allow political violence, sending a clear message that such actions are unacceptable.

5. Strengthen South-South Cooperation: South-South cooperation is the central axis of a sovereign and solidarity-based development strategy.

A concrete proposal was the creation of a **Network of Women in Politics** from Latin America and Spain to strengthen women's leadership in decision-making spaces, offering comprehensive support that includes the development of technical and strategic capacities as well as the emotional backing needed to face the challenges of political and public life.

Club de Madrid will be working to promote this network together with key institutions in the region.

List of Participants

Club de Madrid Delegation

1. **Michelle Bachelet**,
President of Chile (2006–2010, 2014–2018), Vice President of Club de Madrid
2. **José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero**,
President of Spain (2004–2011), Member of Club de Madrid
3. **Enrique Iglesias**,
Secretary General of SEGIB (2005–2014), Honorary Member of Club de Madrid
4. **María Elena Agüero**,
Secretary General, Club de Madrid

Political Leaders of the Region:

5. **Anais Burgos**,
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6. **Eva Copa**,
Mayor of El Alto, Bolivia
7. **Estela Díaz**,
Minister of Women and Diversity of the Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina
8. **Marcela Guerrero**,
Former Minister of the Status of Women, Costa Rica
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12. **Blanca Ovelar**,
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16. **Marcela Ríos,**
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Representatives of International Organizations and Experts:

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