

Side Event: High-level dialogue on digital violence against women in politics

67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

March 7, 8:15 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

Democracies in the region continue to face significant challenges in achieving equal participation of women in politics and in government positions particularly. The Inter-American Commission on Women (CIM) has made extensive reference to the multiple gendered barriers that hinder the achievement of parity in democracies and that undermine the effective exercise of women's political rights. Among them, the gender-based violence that is exercised against women in politics stands out. According to a global survey by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU, 2016), 81.8% of women legislators in the world declared having suffered psychological violence at some point during their parliamentary term. In this context, digital violence is today a central concern for women and political leaders in the region and has become one of the main risks for democratic coexistence, freedom of expression, privacy and digital security for women.

Digital violence against women is not an isolated problem but is located in a broader social context of gender inequality and discrimination against women who participate in political life, either as electoral candidates or when they hold government office, and is also exercised against women human rights defenders and activists, as political actors, as well as against women who are in charge of political organizations. This violence is a dynamic expression that encompasses diverse practices of violence facilitated or reconfigured by information and communication technologies (ICTs) and that is directed against women who participate in politics. It causes significant psychological, physical, sexual and/or economic harm and suffering to women, and their families,¹ and has implications for the quality of democracy and the exercise of rights and freedoms.

One of the most innovative initiatives that exist in the region to document and measure this violence is promoted by the government of Uruguay, through the Women's Institute, with the "Monitor of digital violence against women."² Based on artificial intelligence classification tools, the monitor provides accessible evidence in real time, updated daily, on the level of attacks and insults received by public figures such as women politicians, journalists, communicators, activists and artists on Twitter. Between March 1 and October 25, 2022, it found that the 180 women studied on a social network received more than 97,000 violent posts, which means 11% of the interactions. Among the most frequent insults, there was belittlement of their abilities, disavowals of their speeches, and allusions to their bodies and sexuality.³

Addressing digital violence against women is also a major challenge. The region has taken notable steps in this regard, such as the approval of what is known as the "Olympia Law" in Mexico, which defines and penalizes digital violence against women. The digital violence that is perpetrated against women politicians also has additional implications for democracy and the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms and other specificities that make it difficult to identify adequate and effective solutions.

In this context and within the framework of CSW 2023, the CIM, together with the Government of Panama and the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network-RSMLAC, organize the side event "High-level dialogue on digital violence towards women politicians," which aims to open a space for dialogue with Ministers for Women and CIM Delegates and identify the following aspects:

- 1) Main challenges that democracies in the region face to counter digital violence against women in politics;
- 2) The implications of this violence for democratic coexistence and for the exercise of women's rights;

¹ <https://www.oas.org/es/sms/cicte/docs/Manual-La-violencia-de-genero-en-linea-contras-las-mujeres-y-ninas.pdf>

² <https://www.violenciadigitalmujeres.uy/>

³ <https://www.gub.uy/presidencia/comunicacion/noticias/inmujeres-presento-agenda-actividades-del-mes-contraviolencia-basada-genero#:~:text=El%20monitor%20de%20violencia%20digital,the%2011%25%20of%20the%20interactions.>

3) Responses from States in terms of measures, policies and legislation to this issue.

The event will take place on **Tuesday, March 7 from 8:15 to 9:30 AM in Conference room A – Conference Building, United Nations.**

Agenda:

Opening words: María Inés Castillo, President of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) 2022-2025, Minister of Social Development of Panama

Introduction: Alejandra MoraMora, Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM)

Panel: Argentina’s Government Representative, TBC

Nancy Tolentino, Minister of Women and Vulnerable Population of Peru

Marci Ien, Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth from Canada

Clemencia Carabalí, Presidential Advisor for Women's Equality of Colombia

United States Government Representative, TBC

Mónica Soto, Magistrate of the Superior Chamber of the Electoral Tribunal of the Judiciary of the Federation of Mexico

Moderator: Sandra Castañeda Martínez, General Coordinator of RSMLAC

Conclusions: UN Women representative

Closing of the event: Alejandra Mora Mora, Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM)