

Opening remarks by María Noel Vaeza, UN Women's Regional Director for the Americas and the Caribbean, during the XV Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean

Buenos Aires, Argentina - November 8, 2022

Good afternoon, dear friends, dear colleagues,

Truly, the energy in this room is impressive. You can feel it, and you can feel the women of the continent.

First, I would like to congratulate the President, and the Minister of Gender and Diversity of the Argentine Republic.

I heartily congratulate you. It is wonderful to listen to you.

And I would also like to greet Antonia Orellana, our dear Minister of Women and Gender Equity of Chile.

Well, we will need all the energy of all the women ministers. Mr. Executive Secretary, excuse me, I am a little informal, but it is a pleasure to be with you at this inauguration, Madam Representative, our representative in Argentina, Mr. Secretary.

Distinguished Ministers, Distinguished Presidents of the gender institutes,

You are the protagonists and all the civil society here with us today.

We also have over 100 congresswomen, and legislators, from all over the continent. A big round of applause for them,

We also have the Minister of Health, the Minister of Education, and the Minister of Social Development of the Republic of Argentina,

A big hug for the ministers and a very big round of applause for all the gender ministers of all the provinces of the Federal Republic of Argentina.

Thank you very much for being here today,

And, of course, I cannot fail to greet and thank the entire United Nations System that accompanies us today.

And finally, to all the representatives of UN Women in our region, a big round of applause for my colleagues,

And I also want to give a big hug to Ana Güzmes, the Director of ECLAC's gender division,

And to the Deputy Regional Director of UN Women, Cecilia Alemany, and my dear friend who has joined us.

And to my dear friend who has taken the conference on her shoulders, Marita Perceval, Secretary for Equality.

Thank you very much, Marita, for all you have done,

And thank you very much, Minister for this continuity in the host government.

We are happy to be in this wonderful city of Buenos Aires!

Well, finally, the day has arrived to inaugurate the XV Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

We have not seen each other since Santiago de Chile, pre-pandemic, in January 2020, where we signed a wonderful declaration of Santiago that we then delivered to the commission of the legal and economic state of the region as another innovation of those made by our dear region to contribute

to how institutional growth and progress towards gender equality continues not only in our region but also in the world.

And now, we will continue to do the same.

We are going to raise our voices so that the creation of comprehensive care systems becomes a pillar of the entire well-being of our society: just like health, education, and social security, so that care becomes the fourth pillar of the well-being of our society, which will rethink and represent a new development model that puts people and mother earth at the center.

Do not forget that this conference is about the care society, and that is why I am so pleased to have so many leaders of the native populations of our region who are here precisely to help us decide how we are going to continue protecting our region's mother earth, our biodiversity, our natural resources.

Care begins with self-care, by taking care of ourselves, but also by taking care of the land that gives us food and gives us life.

I want to leave you with four key messages.

The first is that we must end the extractivism of women's time. We must send an unambiguous message to politicians and society.

No more unpaid care that is neither recognized, redistributed, nor reduced!

This must be proclaimed throughout the region: we cannot allow care to continue to be a sexual division of labor that has been in place since we were little since we women were born. It is not possible.

Gentlemen, I am sorry to tell you the time has come for co-responsibility. With this conference, we are beginning to promote a Cultural Revolution by

placing men's co-responsibility at the center of care. We need to redistribute unpaid care work, and this is serious, gentlemen.

We are tired, we are outraged, and we want a change, and that is the purpose of this conference to look for solutions to see how we are going to position care, as I was saying, as a pillar of welfare, a pillar of sustainable development, a pillar that must call upon all women in the region to say:

"Presidents, we need budgets, but more than anything else, we need political will and commitment."

Investing in care is not only necessary, but it also is fair, and it is economically intelligent, and generates multiple social and labor-economic benefits.

Yes, care generates jobs, quality jobs, jobs that we mean: these are the jobs that are going to support in the economic revival of our region. And on top of that, they are green jobs because they do not pollute.

On the contrary, they generate love, they create well-being, and these are the jobs we need!

In short, all this is very nice, but without budgets, without systems to finance it, it will remain mere rhetoric.

I want to assure you that none of us here want rhetoric: we want actions, we want a budget, and we want political will.

Thank you very much.