

Speech by María Noel Vaeza, Regional Director of the Regional Office of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for the Americas and the Caribbean, at the closing of the Special Regional Consultation Session prior to the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women of the 66th Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women

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Thank you very much, Cynthia Figueredo, Minister of Women of Paraguay [moderator].

Thank you all very much. It was a pleasure to listen to all of you. Since I have very little time, I will be categorical: the mechanisms for the advancement of women have made significant progress, as some of you have stated in recent years, Ecuador, Colombia, Panama, and Mexico. These have been very important countries that have raised the institutional category of the mechanisms for the advancement of women, although not their budgets.

We continue to have 0.18% of the national budgets of the leading countries that have elevated the ministries of women's affairs to a higher category. In the case of Chile, it is the only country where the Minister of Women is on the smallest political committee, other than the President. This means that the gender issue has been politically elevated, but we do not have these structures in other countries.

Often, the ministers of gender have told me that they have problems positioning the issues because they do not have the strength they need, and many times, it is with this alliance with UN Women, with ECLAC, with other United Nations agencies that we support the ministers so that they have that strength. I think we are on the right track, and I want to be positive, but 0.18% is nothing for 50% of the population.

We need to increase those budgets, and for that, we will have a parliamentary forum in Mexico. It is crucial to talk to parliamentarians. We need to have that dialogue with the parliaments, who are the ones who ultimately approve the budgets. Then, we also need to look at other sectors. Our economies are based on extraction. What are we doing to penetrate those systems that are impenetrable and that violate women's rights?

We need to be more present and demand a much more significant presence in all sectors of the economy because these sectors do not enter the national budget. What does that mean? We do not know where the investments are going, but surely, they are not going to women. So, we need to look more closely and demand a presence in all sectors of the economy.

We cannot remain isolated in the ministries of women who are weak and without technical and financial capabilities. We have to raise our voices in everything.

Finally, I would like to remind you that the Regional Office, under the leadership of Barbara Ortiz, has prepared a compendium of the mechanisms and national authorities on gender issues over the last 30 years. And it is very little what we have increased or raised institutionally. But for me, politically, the worst thing is how we are present in the fundamental political decisions made by the presidents and by the most important ministers.

For me, that is the key. Our feminist movement, which is amazing and knows how to do it, and we saw it, has known how to do it for 50 years. Yesterday, we witnessed it with Gina Vargas' book and with all the civil society expressions we have heard, all the wonderful anecdotes that, thanks to those anecdotes, the movement has grown in protest and in constructive demands. Because, if something constructive comes from the movement, not like in the difficult context we are in, we need to increase those strategies and those tactics. Because there are times when we can work in one sector, sometimes in another, maybe not as often as we would like, but we need to reflect on that.

How do we enter all sectors of the economy? How do we demand the presence of women in all sectors of the economy, and how do we continue to strengthen the mechanisms because that is what Beijing stated?

These mechanisms are very important for the Minister of Women, the Women's Institute, or the National Women's Authority to have a say in all sectors of the economy, to generate employment for women, to create opportunities for women in all sectors of the economy, not only because it is fundamental for strengthening economic autonomy, but also to fight against the most significant problem we have, which is violence.

Thank you very much.