

PRESS RELEASE

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IACHR PRESENTS REPORT ON WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Washington, D.C., October 21, 2011 – The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) today published the Report *The Road to Substantive Democracy: Women's Political Participation in the Americas*, which examines the participation of women in government and public life from a human rights perspective.

Both the inter-American and international human rights protection systems recognize women's participation in government and equal access to public office as fundamental rights. The obligation to ensure that women have the opportunity to fully enjoy their political rights, free from all forms of discrimination, emerges from the American Convention on Human Rights, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The international and inter-American consensus that the guarantee of women's full political participation, free from all forms of discrimination, is essential for the protection of their human rights is also found in the Millennium Development Goals, the World Conference on Women ("Beijing Conference"), the International Conference on Population and Development ("Cairo Conference"), and the Quito Consensus, adopted at the Tenth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Notwithstanding this recognition in international norms, women in the Americas continue to face a number of obstacles in accessing positions of power, owing to their under-representation at the various levels of government and public life in the countries of the Americas. In addition, indigenous women and women of African descent are proportionally even less represented than other women in the decision-making process. In this report, the IACHR makes recommendations to the States on the measures that should be adopted to eliminate discrimination against women in public life and to guarantee the full exercise of their political rights in a democracy.

The preparation of this report is the result of a process of research and analysis of information made possible by the financial support of the government of Finland.

A principal, autonomous body of the Organization of American States(OAS), the IACHR derives its mandate from the OAS Charter and the American Convention on Human Rights. The Inter-American Commission has a mandate to promote respect for human rights in the region and acts as a consultative body to the OAS in this matter. The Commission is composed of seven independent members who are elected in an individual capacity by the OAS General Assembly and who do not represent their countries of origin or residence.