

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Declaration

11 August 2008
AMR 01/003/2008

Mechanism to Follow Up on Implementation of the Convention of Belém do Pará on Violence against Women (MESECVI): An opportunity to establish appropriate means of civil society participation

MESECVI is the mechanism for follow-up to the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women, “Convention of Belém do Pará.” It consists of the Conference of States Parties, which is the political organ made up of representatives of the states parties, and the Committee of Experts, which is the technical organ made up of specialists appointed by the governments, in a personal capacity, in the area of violence against women. The Mechanism’s Technical Secretariat is the Permanent Secretariat of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM).

The Committee of Experts conducts multilateral evaluation rounds on the basis of responses to a questionnaire on select provisions of the Convention of Belém do Pará whose implementation is reviewed. Based on the responses of the states parties, the Committee issues a final report with corresponding recommendations, which must be followed up on.^{1/}

The next meeting of the Committee of Experts of the Mechanism to Follow Up on Implementation of the Convention of Belém do Pará will be held in Washington, D.C., from August 13 to 15, 2008. This meeting—the Committee’s fourth—will discuss, among other topics, approval of indicators in this area, coordination of the process for following up on the recommendations of the Committee of Experts, and the development of the second multilateral evaluation round.

As far as the second round is concerned, it has been reported that the methodology and general criteria to be used from now on will be among the important topics for discussion. Amnesty International considers therefore that the Committee of Experts has an invaluable opportunity to make significant strides regarding civil society participation in the Mechanism’s evaluation processes.

When the Mechanism to Follow Up on Implementation of the Convention of Belém do Pará was created in October 2004, no appropriate rules were established to allow for participation and inputs by the largest possible number of individuals and organizations in civil society in a timely, transparent, and open way. Nonetheless, Amnesty International has observed a few moments of

1. “*Report on the Implementation of the Follow-Up Mechanism to the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women, ‘Convention of Belém do Pará’*” in compliance with resolution AG/RES. 2162 (XXXVI-O/06), OEA/Ser.L, CIM/doc.96/07, March 21, 2007, pp. 1- 2.

relative openness to these persons and organizations. Even so, there is a patent and pressing need to establish clear, unequivocal rules to make civil society participation in the monitoring process easy, wide-ranging, and ongoing, taking into account the important task of making progress in the prevention and eradication of violence against women in the Hemisphere.

Accordingly, Amnesty International urges the members of the Committee of Experts to establish, during this meeting that is about to begin, the following rules and policies, among others:

- Provide regularly updated information on the monitoring process through the Web page of the Technical Secretariat of the MESECVI, which is in the hands of the CIM, including work plans and agendas.
- Issue open calls to all individuals and organizations in civil society who are interested and experienced in the topic of violence against women, through the Web page of the Technical Secretariat of the MESECVI, asking them to provide written information and views in response to the respective questionnaire. A similar procedure should be followed at the national level by the National Competent Authorities (NCAs).
- Extend invitations, through the Web page of the Technical Secretariat of the MESECVI and through the NCAs in each of the respective countries, to individuals and organizations in civil society to attend the meetings of the Committee of Experts, if they have the material means to do so.
- Publish and distribute the final report, including country reports, the observations of the states parties, and the hemispheric report, in accordance with Article 24 of the Rules of Procedure of the Committee of Experts.
- Invite individuals and organizations in civil society to submit opinions and suggestions on the implementation of the recommendations of the first round.