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MEXICAN WOMEN'S PARLIAMENT:
IS IT THE WAY TO REACH GENDER EQUITY?

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Abstract

One of the most important decisions taken by the Mexican Assembly is to approve the annual budget of the country. Beijing Agreements in 1995 change the perception in the parliament which was merely for men. So, the few Mexican women in the parliament from the different parties organized the "Women's Parliament" to reach gender equity not only in the different parties but in political, economic and social life. This year the women deputies and senators divided the country in five regions and had meetings outside of the central parliament office, at San Lázaro in Mexico City. These meetings tried to include the rich diversity demands from the different states, municipals and NGOs that participate during three weeks between February and March 2005. At the end of the regional meetings all the agreements were approved in the federal parliament. After Beijing Agreements + 10 not only the government but politicians are aware of improving empowerment women which has been a goal in a "machista" and traditional society.

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“Mexican Women’s Parliament: is it the way to reach gender equity”

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One of the most important decisions taken by the Mexican Assembly is to approve the annual budget of the country. Beijing Agreements in 1995 change the perception in the parliament which was merely for men. So, the few Mexican women in the parliament from the different parties organized the “Women’s Parliament” to reach gender equity not only in the different parties but in political, economic and social life. After Beijing Agreements not only the government but politicians are aware of improving empowerment women which has been a goal in a “machista” and traditional society.

I. Historical Background

Women’s Parliament was constituted the 8th of March of 1998. It is formed by The Gender and Equity Commissions’ chambers of senators and deputies, members of the parliament. These commissions were formed with the aim to follow the Beijing Agreements and have a response to the women’s problems in Mexico. Since its creation until the last meeting in March 18th of this year, the meeting was regionalized between deputies and senators. The country was divided in five regions and dialogue and discussion was raised through seven topics.

The approach between women and civil society, politic organizations, NGO’s, academic institutions, feminist movements, public administrators and legislators of all the politic parties, established a formal dialogue with specific obligations and some agreements. Again the Legislative Palace, *San Lazaro* open its doors to a numerous women’s contingent that for years has waited for a direct dialogue with its popular representations.

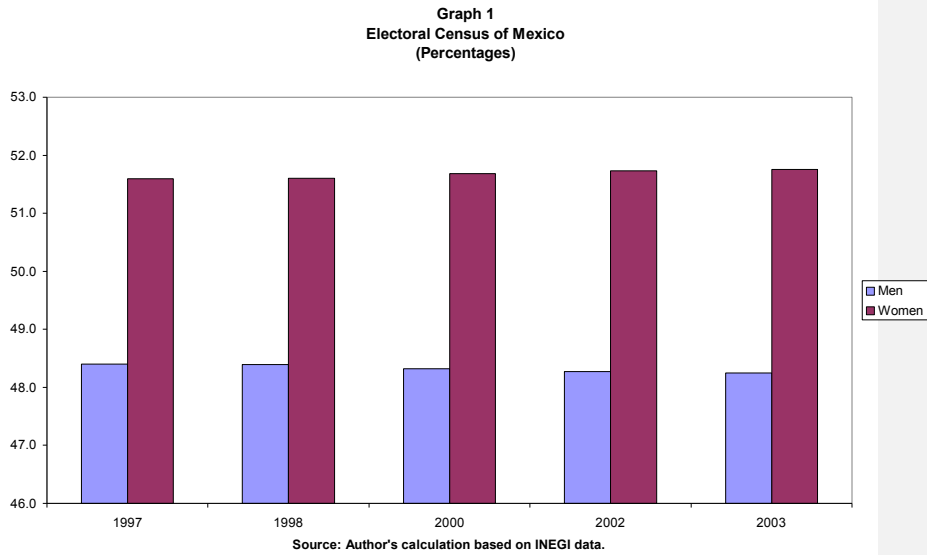
Even though women are majority in the total population and in the census for election, do to the fact that in the 2003 census they represented de 51.8%, see graphic 1, their participation in the election positions is still very small. In the deputy parliament, they represented only the 22.2% and the senators represented only 18.7%.

Nevertheless, the women votes to the parties are of great interest, because winning this population can be the difference between the triumph or the failure.

The objective of this short paper is to demonstrate that even though women participation is still very precarious in the decisions making,

the progress gain contributes to the elaboration of laws and norms against gender discrimination.

The central hypothesis is that women representation in the decision making through the legislative parliaments shows a relation between politic power exercise by women and, the level and development of the society.



II. Electoral census, militants and representatives.

Mexican women had participated in accelerated way in the job market since the economic crisis started in the mid seventies and eighties. Integrating in a massive to the job market way for augmenting the family salary, gain independence and having voice in the decision making in the daily life. A greater access to education and changes in the types of economic development in the country has had an impact in new forms of the traditional family life.

In the politics, a greater participation of women is clearly reflected in a mayor incidence of positions taken from popular election or in the politic parties' structure. This process reproduces the needs of a

society in its whole to consider and integrate the life experience of women, in the solution of new economic, social and cultural needs, through the modification of ruling laws and regulations.

These days women represent more than 50% of the electoral census and in most of the political parties half of its militants are women, but still when it exists different gender installments in the intern documents of the political parties¹ and in the COFIPE (Federal Code of Institutions and Electoral Procedures) it has a minimum of 30%, for the integration of the lists of candidacy of the positions for popular elections, in reality the current legislation women parliament and senator women have a 21.5% of the total in both chambers, this is that in the legislative practice, for intern reasons of the integrated political parties of the women candidacies, these do not reach nearly the minimum percentage of fees that are proposed in the legislation.

The lowest political participation is in the presidential municipalities' category, in 2002 and 2003, women reached nearly 3.9% of the total. In absolute numbers, in 2003 there were only 96 women as municipal president versus 2,351 men.

III. Women ana political empowerment.

One of the biggest worries and challenges in a development country are that women participate in the decisions around its economic, political and social surrounding. This is a warning that still there is a lot to do in the side of the political parties, so that their speech is not only useful to manage women as an electoral market, but to achieve in real life their integration to gain positions where they can contribute their experience to give solutions in a realistic and practical way, to the actual necessities of women.

It is important to highlight that one of the principal concern of United Nations are the public policies. Only consolidating the laws and regulations that rule the budget with a gender focus, the women situation can be improved. While revising the quantities authorized by the parliament to the programs with gender focus, these always represented a minimum percentage in relation with the total

¹ The PRI has a gender fee of 50% and the PRD of 30%.

expenditure generalized, this means that it is not observed the inequality conditions of women.

In the other side, we shouldn't look down to the evolution of the feminine participation, in the XLII Legislation (1952-1955) there was only one woman and in the actual LIX Legislation (2003-2006) they are 119. In the case of the senators, of one woman there are now 24, this means that in both chambers there are 143 women participating.

Alicia 1/6/05 12:52

Comment [1]: Checa la redacción en español en este párrafo que no se entiende.

Table 1
Deputies in the different legislatures
1952- 2006

Legislature	Period	Total	Men	Women
XLII	1952-55	162	161	1
XLIII	1955-58	160	156	4
XLIV	1958-61	162	154	8
XLV	1961-64	185	176	9
XLVI	1964-67	210	197	13
XLVII	1967-70	210	198	12
XLVIII	1970-73	197	184	13
XLIX	1973-76	231	212	19
L	1976-79	236	215	21
LI	1979-82	400	368	32
LII	1982-85	400	358	42
LIII	1985-88	400	358	42
LIV	1988-91	500	442	58
LV	1991-94	499	455	44
LVI	1994-97	496	424	72
LVII	1997-00	500	413	87
LVIII a/	2000-03	500	411	89
LIX b/	2003-06	496	385	111

Source: Author's calculation based on INEGI data.

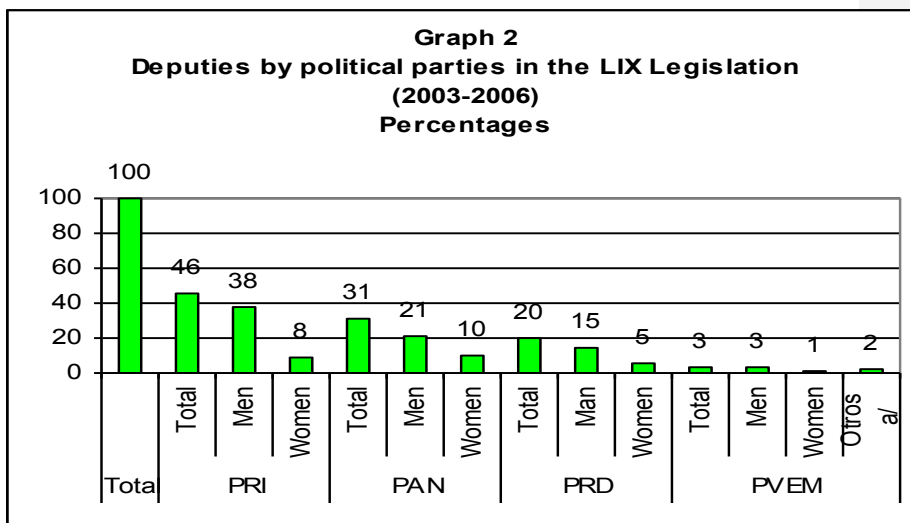
IV. Advance in women participation in the different legislations.

The woman reaches the vote in 1951 and had its first representation in the XLII Legislation chamber (1952-1955). Since that date, women participation has been advancing recurrently until duplicating the number of participants in the nineties. These days in accordance with the Third Government Report, women still represent at least

one third of the actual legislation. In the following chart it can be observed the raise of women in relation to the number of men.

V. Present legislation and women participation in different political parties.

The political parties more representative in Mexico are PRI, PAN and PRD. Considering the participation in the parliament chamber of women of each political parties, it is observed that the PAN (National Action Party, by its abbreviation in Spanish), has the mayor number of women as deputies reaching the 10% of women and 21 percent of men, of the total of 500 (men and women) that integrate the parliament chamber. It is followed by descending order the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party, by its abbreviation in Spanish) with and 8% of legislative women facing 38% of masculine sex, the PRD (Democratic Revolutionary Party, by its abbreviation in Spanish) contribute only to a 5% of the women and 15% of men, continued by the PVEM (Mexican Ecologist Green Party, by its abbreviation in Spanish) with 1% of women and 3% of men. In the following graphic we can see the percentage of women in each party.



In relation with the senator's chamber, the total of representative women is of 24 versus 104 men; this means that there is only 23% of women representation, the political party that contributes more to this feminine representation is PRI that has 12 women, half (6 women), of this number the PAN and PRD only reaches to integrate two senator women, the PVEM has 4 women in the Senate, see the following chart.

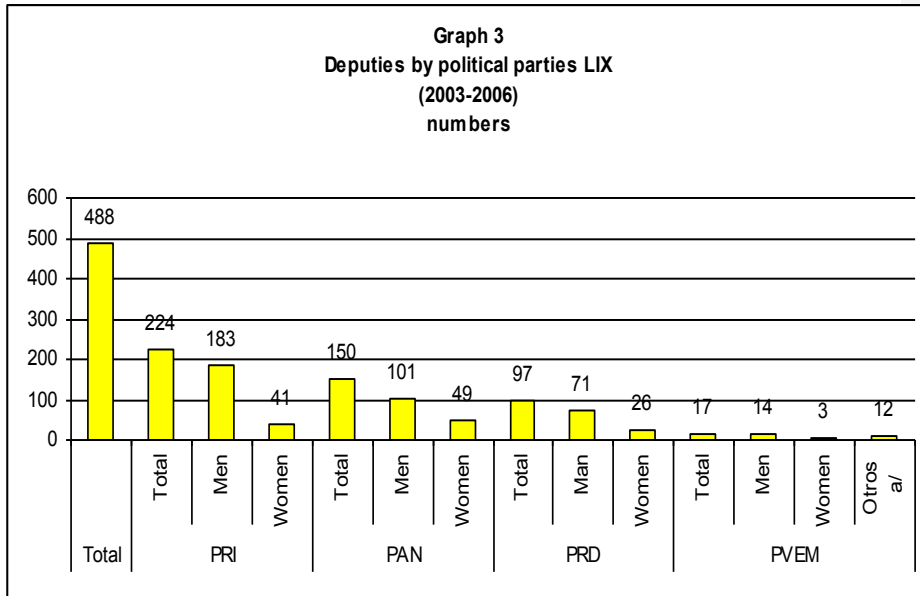


Table 2
Senators that conform the LIX Legislature
(2003-2006)

Legislature	Period	Total	Men	Women
XLVI y XLVII	1964 a 1970	58	55	3
XLVIII y XLIX	1970 a 1976	60	54	6
L y LI	1976 a 1982	64	56	8
LII y LIII	1982 a 1988	64	44	20
LIV	1988 a 1991	64	54	10
LV	1991 a 1994	64	62	2
LVI	1994 a 1997	128	115	13
LVII	1997 a 2000	128	108	20
LVIII	2000 a 2003	128	105	23
LIX a/	2003 a 2006	128	104	24

a/ They weren't elections for senators

VI. Conclusions.

The spaces won by women in Beijing in 1995 represent the universal agenda paradigm, the theoretic-methodologic focus and the political feminist practice. From this moment the political participation demand of women is globalized and institutionalized in the society, beyond the academic analysis. The relation women, gender and politics is a tense correlation, because the politics from the gender studies covers the private and public lives of our society.

Starting to increase this awareness, advancing towards the democracy in the Latin-American societies has put in debate, the authoritarian State and the patriarchal power of the daily happening.

One of the conclusions of the present work in relation to the Women's Parliament is, in the political life and in different political parties women have been incorporated gradually. This incorporation has been not much for the internal political determination, but because women represent every day more than a number of mayor votes, as well as that electoral parties have imposed gender fees to the parties, so that this integration has not been as accelerated as the way society and gender equity demand. It is hoped that in the next ten years women have a more active participation and this will be reflected in a political participation more equitable.

One of the more important decisions of the Deputies Chamber is the approval of the budget with a "gender focus". This decision involves principally funding politics to development where it is included public health policies specific to women, credit to micro-entrepreneur, housing, girl's childhood, education, etc. Last year, in November some budgets were approved including the gender vision. This made a distinction of the different programs and now days it is expected that they continue growing.

At least one society where it is reinforced women in development participation could eradicate the economic surrounding, political patriarchal and social environment in Mexico.

Anexo No. 1

SEPTIMA REUNIÓN ANUAL

“PARLAMENTO DE MUJERES DE MÉXICO

DECLARACIÓN POLÍTICA

La Séptima Reunión Anual del Parlamento de Mujeres de México conjunta las voces más diversas de las mujeres de toda la República Mexicana que participamos en las 5 reuniones regionales realizadas en Nayarit, Michoacán, Nuevo León, Chiapas y Puebla.

Las propuestas emanadas de cada ejercicio regional requieren del análisis, formulación, impulso y cumplimiento de una agenda legislativa con perspectiva de género que surja de las participaciones y se apegue a los derechos de las mujeres reconocidos en la legislación nacional y los acuerdos internacionales firmados por México.

Hoy las más de 1,400 mujeres presentes, de todos los estados del país, con representación de la más amplia diversidad ideológica y política, reunidas en el Palacio Legislativo de San Lázaro, declaramos:

1. - No cederemos en la lucha por la reivindicación de nuestros derechos humanos, civiles, políticos, sociales y económicos.
2. - Celebramos la ratificación de la Plataforma de Acción de Beijing en la 49ª Sesión de la Comisión de la Condición Jurídica y Social de la Mujer donde se refrendó el compromiso con la equidad, la justicia, la igualdad, la inclusión y la democracia en México y en el mundo.
3. - Nos pronunciamos por el respeto y la defensa de la educación en México por ser salvaguarda de la igualdad de oportunidades, las libertades, los derechos y la soberanía.
4. - Seguiremos empeñadas en lograr un presupuesto con enfoque de género así como mayores asignaciones a favor del adelanto de las mujeres.
5. - Denunciamos la violencia contra las mujeres en todas sus manifestaciones y refrendamos nuestro compromiso para continuar nuestra lucha por abatirla y lograr la prevención, la atención y el acceso a la justicia de las mujeres y sus familias.
6. - Ratificamos nuestro compromiso para el esclarecimiento de todos los casos de feminicidios de mujeres y niñas en todo el país y desde luego en Ciudad Juárez.
7. - Repudiamos la represión que sufrieran mujeres turcas y un sinnúmero de mujeres en todo el mundo que se manifestaron en sus países defendiendo los derechos de las mujeres, en el marco del Día Internacional de las Mujeres.
8. - Continuaremos en nuestros esfuerzos por lograr una reforma laboral con enfoque de género que garantice la igualdad de oportunidades, la equidad y la justicia laborales así como la vigencia de un mundo laboral libre de acoso y violencia contra todas las mujeres.

9. - Buscaremos los cauces de solución a la problemática regional así como a la valoración de la diversidad y la multiculturalidad en nuestro país planteada en las mesas que para el caso fueron instaladas en las 5 sedes.

El Parlamento de Mujeres de México ha sido un espacio en el que las mexicanas hacemos un ejercicio hacia el fortalecimiento de una agenda legislativa con perspectiva de género el cual deberá ser evaluado y renovado, constante y permanentemente, para garantizar el respeto y la protección de los Derechos Humanos de todas las mujeres durante todo su ciclo de vida y de esta manera alcanzar los objetivos que nos hemos propuesto.

Seguiremos fomentando y enriqueciendo los mecanismos de interlocución en los que prevalezca el respeto por las diferencias, la tolerancia y el aporte puntual para el adelanto de las mujeres.

Nos pronunciamos contra todo tipo de intolerancia, fundamentalismo y limitación a las libertades democráticas. Entre nosotras no hay cabida a ningún tipo de discriminación y mucho menos de violencia, por el contrario, propugnaremos por el fortalecimiento de nuestra solidaridad y por el avance de nuestro género.

¡Sí a la democracia participativa!,

¡Sí a la generación de propuestas que broten de la ciudadanía!,

¡Sí al diálogo respetuoso, informado y responsable!

¡Sí a los Derechos Humanos y a la ciudadanía plena de todas las mujeres!

¡Sí a los avances que hemos logrado como resultado de la unidad en los acuerdos!

La Séptima Reunión Anual del Parlamento de Mujeres de México cumple una etapa más.

A las legisladoras nos queda la tarea de evaluar y dar seguimiento a las propuestas, que respeten los términos planteados en nuestra Convocatoria, emanados de las 5 reuniones regionales, a fin de trasladar las propuestas al ámbito legislativo y servir como puente conductor de las demandas dirigidas a los Poderes Ejecutivo y Judicial, en corresponsabilidad con la propia ciudadanía.

Palacio Legislativo de San Lázaro

México, D. F., a 18 de marzo de 2005

Comisión Bicameral

"Parlamento de Mujeres de México"