



Women: key factor for the consolidation of the EU-CELAC agenda

*by Claudia Calvin Venero**

It will be impossible to build a future of prosperity, inclusion, democracy and development if the presence and participation of women is not considered in a proactive and assertive way. This is a fact for all countries as well as for international relations, and strategic partnerships, such as the EU-CELAC.

Women are half the population of the planet, however our presence in decision-making and policy making processes, economic participation, media and global fora do not reflect this. Our reality remains invisible in many of these spaces and thus the decisions taken on them only serve to accentuate the differences and inequalities that characterize today the situation of women in the world.

Far too little has been done to incorporate and to mainstream the gender perspective in international decision-making processes, and to include it in the international fora and strategic partnerships agenda. It is time to change the approach, women and men participating in these spaces must include this perspective clearly in the meetings, agreements and decisions carried out. The next meeting of the 61 heads of state of EU-CELAC may be key to set a precedent of this magnitude.

What does this mean specifically?

Leaders participating in this meeting must keep in mind that the strengthening of relations passes through the inclusion and well-being of the population of their countries and that without this precondition, they will not meet the development objectives, cooperation or the consolidation of agreements. Women are not an issue: they are half the population.

The central theme of the meeting to be held next June is *"Shaping our Common Future: working together for prosperous, cohesive & sustainable development"*. It's time to visualize the conditions that prevent prosperity, cohesion and the sustainability of our societies. It is more than a casual meeting, it is a meeting that brings together a third of the UN members and more than half of the G-20, and on whose territory live more than a billion people.

If the goal is to promote the identity and shared values between Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean, and further political dialogue on initiatives to citizens in relation to the innovation for sustainable growth, education, security and climate change, gender perspective must be added in each of these agendas.

Are values concerning human rights of women, their economic and political empowerment, shared between countries attending the meeting? What concrete measures are being taken to guarantee the active participation of women in the previous consultation processes, and to monitor the statements and agreements resulting from it? Are there indicators disaggregated between women and men in each of the agendas:

education, security, climate change, sustainable growth? Has it been verified if the policies derived from the meeting introduce a gender perspective? This is one of the conditions required to talk about the impact of the decisions and agreements. What are the gender gaps in each of the areas to be treated?

The answer to these questions will give a perspective to the work of the meeting and will allow to take into account the whole society of this partnership: women and men. Differences and gaps must be highlighted, so that they can transcend and create a real impact from the meeting.

This should be supplemented by two actions, that can also provide a different reading of the meeting and generate a big change:

1. To know the status of each of the participating countries in terms of international commitments on gender. They have signed and ratified the CEDAW? What progress has been made on the Beijing Platform for Action? While the Convention of Belém do Pará is an inter-American convention, it can be considered as a mechanism that the region brings within this dialogue.
2. To have clarity about the internal harmonisation of the countries with regard to international treaties on women's rights that have been signed. In other words, we must know whether their domestic laws are consistent in terms of economic, political and social rights of women with the treaties they have signed.

The idea is to harness the strength and presence of the leaders of such a wide region, and to promote an agenda that has a real impact, not just declarative, in society and to allow, in effect, shape a common future.

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