

GENERAL PRESENTATION, POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMICAL CONTEXT OF ARGENTINA

Madam Chairperson,

Distinguished experts,

Excellencies,

Friends and colleagues,

In this occasion, I have the privilege of representing the Government of the Republic of Argentina to consider the Follow Up Report of the Fifth Periodical Report of the Republic of Argentina, introduced in the month of January 2004.

In the first place, it is necessary to point out that the current Government of my country, which assumed on May 25th 2003, represents a new position of Argentina, in the political, economical, social and cultural fields, and in human rights

The devastating effects of policies impeled, since the mid-seventies, become evident in an unequivocal way with the current crisis we are going through and that regrettably we will continue going through for some more years.

In addition to poverty resulting statistics, intolerable because they affect almost half of our population (men, women, boys and girls and elder people) a big social fragmentation takes place as well as the loss of values that were strongly incorporated in citizenship.

The neo-liberal model applied in the country in those years, replaced institutions that gave support to rights generalized among the working population during the fifties, in which Argentina was at the forefront in the field of labor and social security, in education, health, employment, and political participation of women, substituting the Argentina of rights for policies that left a debilitated State and reduced in its capacity of articulating social demands and ensure the validity of fundamental rights, a political class without credibility and a emerging social reality, sharp, with its own and new organization forms.

To modify and transform this reality is the big challenge that our Government imposed to itself, without delay, with firmness, pointing out the corresponding causes and responsibilities, both at the national and international levels.

The Government project puts in a central place the idea of reconstruction of a national capitalism which generates alternatives that allow reinstallation of ascending social mobility, promoting **active policies for development and economical growth of the country, the creation of jobs, a more equitable wealth distribution. The State recovers a fundamental role, with the social inclusion model of women and men, and the strengthening, preservation and assistance of families** –primary organization in which values, identity and culture are shared-.

Argentina's reconstruction requires –and we advance in that direction- a present State, with initiative to promote growth with social justice, that eradicates corruption and patronizing, that banish the culture of impunities that cut across public institutions and private organizations.

It is important to underline the role and space play by organized civil society, both in the planning as well as in the put into practice assistance programmes, of promotion and capacity building that cooperate strongly in the restoration of the social tissue, recovering of values, exercise of rights and combat for equality of opportunities, benefiting from their experience and social insertion. This participation hierarchizes itself in the establishment of Consultive Councils of social policy that have as mandate (at the national, provincial and municipal level) to take decisions regarding the functioning of social plans: beneficiaries, productive, assistance projects, etc.

Our Government set out a profound institutional renovation of the Judicial Power, starting with the Supreme Court of Justice. In a decision without precedents the Executive Power gave transparency to the mechanisms of selection of judges, self-limiting its discretion and incorporating the mechanism of public audience for National Senators to have the opportunity of hearing the social consideration of the candidates proposed by the Executive Power. In this process, it is our pleasure to inform that the Executive Power has nominated 2 women distinguished jurists, among the 3 new members. For the first time in our country, one of them already assumed and the other one was already approved by the Senate. Only a Justice in which we can trust can guarantee a real social and jointly liable transformation, only a Justice selected with mechanisms of merit and transparency is able to combat impunity, which is elementary, indispensable, to face the institutional and cultural transformations that will allow to fulfill our commitments in the field of human rights in general and of women in particular.

Argentina's reconstruction would be unthinkable without the assumption of our history and we gave answer to the society's claim, delay for many years, of a firm policy of human rights with regard to the military dictatorship, the unconstitutionality of the so called laws of Full Stop and Due Obedience, and the punishment of those who committed genocide; as well as the combat of corruption within Security Forces and all forms of impunity; the acknowledgement of the work done by Madres and by Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, in the recovering of their grand-children and the right to their identity. Another important step is the creation of the Memory Museum in the space that occupied one of the clandestine repression centers.

Argentina's reconstruction requires an integral policy of social inclusion and combat poverty. The Argentine families are the addressees of the social policies of the Government, in order to allow the reconstruction of a social tissue damaged to the very profound. Our Government has as strategic axis to promote the access by adult women and men to decent job, to sustain the family table, education of their children, care of their elders. For that, it was necessary: increase the social expenditure budget up to 2.100 millions Pesos (300 millions more than in 2003), but also to finish with the atomization of disperse social programmes replacing them with a federal net of social policies based in three axis: 1) National Plan of Food Security. 2) National Plan of Local Development and Social Economy and 3) Family Plan. With a methodology that incorporates and encloses the work done in each province –respecting its identity and particularities- the Ministry of Social Development has achieved an important qualitative leap regarding efficiency, taking into account that 94.4% of the budget allocated to

social programmes reach in a direct form the beneficiaries instead of the 40% (or less) that reached them in previous years.

The establishment of a National Plan of Public Work is accompanied with the drive to cooperatives integrated by men and women for building houses, with its consequent professional and cooperative capacity building and answer to a priority social problem.

Our Government adopts an active position regarding the national interest in the negotiation of the public debt. In this regard and as a regional initiative, together with Brazil, we requested that International Organizations do not compute as expenditures productive investments and social expenditures.

From the national Government, during 2002 and 2003, the main public policies aimed at palliate the crisis situation and the high poverty index, were the Economic Emergency Law, the Emergency Health Law, the National Programme of Food Emergency and the Unemployed Chief of Home.

From June 2003, three national plans of the social policy are started up, together with the measures we already described in the Follow Up Report and which their incidence in the women's situation in Argentina we will make comments on each of the points of interest of Committee members. Among them, its worthy to remind: increase of income in the private sector, start up of the discussion on Collective Conventions. Minimum Wage for 2004 increased to **\$ 350**. The public sector and minimum pensions also increased.

The increase in the budget for social expenditure has allowed to significantly improved the scope of programmes such as the Pension for Mothers of **7 or more children**, the life annuity that covers –for the first time- to every person older than 70 without social security, women in its majority.

Our President said with all eloquence that we work firmly to surface. The adopted policies have a component of assistance to emergency, with the course of an strategic path of growth with social justice, with equity between men and women, with an integral and integrated vision of policies –our Government eradicates from the management practice the superposition of efforts and replaces them with the concept of integration of efforts.

The crisis has generated a multiplicity of organization and social participation forms of our people –above all of our women. That enormous energy, that popular wisdom that has implemented different strategies for the support of family groups, to build multiple forms of assistance and social solidarity in all the national territory. These actions deepen the awareness of its rights and the need of their effective exercise by population in general and by women in particular.

Social Development Minister defines, consequently, the guidelines of the national policy of social development and articulates that policy with the social demand. Our Government works to build channels and ways that allow that energy to multiply and increase itself in the recovering of rights, in the dignity of work, in the possibility of coming back to share the familial table, in the equal opportunities for men and women.

Woman's National Council has institutional agreements with different bodies of the Executive Power and accompanies the development of strategic policies in order to recover the culture of work, the strengthening of the family with a sense of equity in rights and responsibilities between men and women. It develops different programmes to build capacity and give technical assistance to Provincial and Municipal Woman's Areas, to governmental and non-governmental organizations, in promotion of rights, work –remunerative and not-, violence and health.

It has two Programmes with international financing for the fulfillment of some of its objectives: the Federal Programme of the Woman (BID) and the Programme of Promotion of Strengthening of the Family and the Social Capital (BIRF). In the other hand, there are budgetary allocation in areas with direct incidence in the quality of life of women: pensions for mother of 7 and more children, pensions for 70 years old and elder people, programme of sexual health and responsible procreation, Food Plan, specially in its components for pregnant women, Mother-Child Plan, Plan Families and of course women's participation in cooperative undertakings and financing of projects of the Plan "To Include"(for young people 18 to 25 years old of both sex) or "Hands to Work", among others.