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Women from around the continent came to La Paz to build communication and plan future strategies

## Strengthening the Network: Second Encounter of Indigenous Women from South, Central America and Mexico

The Executive Committee of the Coordinating Body of Indigenous Women of South and Central America (CIMI) met in La Paz, Bolivia, from July 4-6 of 1994 in preparation for the General Assembly that will take place in Mexico in August of 1995, and for the Fourth World Women's Conference of the United Nations in Beijing in 1995.

The meeting in La Paz was hosted by Centro de Discusion Ideologico de la Mujer Aymara (CDIMA) and attended by delegates from Guatemala, Panama, Mexico, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Peru, Argentina and a representative from the Coordinadora de Mujeres Indigenas de Bolivia (CMIB).

### Background:

In August of 1990, the Sabmi Women's organizations from Norway organized an international Indigenous Women's Conference. At that event, women representatives from all countries in the American continent

were present and decided to call a meeting to set up a network of Indigenous Women from Mexico, Central and South America. The First Encounter of Indigenous Women from South and Central America took place in Lima, Peru, in March of 1991. At that meeting the Coordinating Body was formed.

This Encounter in La Paz was initiated with an Aymara-Quechua ceremony which is the Waxt'a, offer to the Pachamama (mother earth).

The committee affirmed the following broad objectives:

1. Promote permanent communication between existing Indigenous women's organizations in order to develop a network of solidarity at the national and international level.
2. Promote the exchange of cultural and organizational experiences between Indigenous women's organizations.
3. Establish relations with national and international organizations and participate actively to articulate, promote and project the demands of women and Indigenous peoples.

In order to achieve these objectives, the committee members established the regional bases for a continental communication and information dissemination network. These will be, the Council of Maya Organization of Guatemala, the Workshop of Kuna Women-Association of Napguana (Panama), the Foundation of Educational, Social and Economic Development FUNDASE (Guatemala); the Coordinating Committee of Indigenous Women of Bolivia and the South and Meso American Indian Rights Center (USA).

The CIMI issued a statement pointing out that eventhough there has been progress in terms of strengthening communication and women's participation in the organizations, there are still abuses against women like physical violence and basic rights, such as education, continue to be discriminatory.(...) The statement also points out that: "Neo-liberal policies of the Latin American governments are putting the Indian communities under more threats. Our territories and the Ecosystems will be more exploited and contaminated."(...)

Members of the Coordinating Body of Indigenous Women are planning to travel to the Fourth World Women's Conference in Beijing to organize a Workshop on the issue of domestic violence. ♡

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