

MUJERES EN LA CARRERA
DIPLOMÁTICA

WOMEN IN THE DIPLOMATIC CAREER

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CON LA PARTICIPACIÓN DE:

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MIN. MABEL GÓMEZ OLIVER Y
EMB. ANNE LAMMILA

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OBJETIVO

Con este foro buscamos un intercambio interesante de experiencias que ilustraron qué significa ser mujer en la diplomacia contemporánea.

La participación de distinguidas diplomáticas y funcionarias públicas de distintas regiones del mundo nos permitió contrastar los rasgos culturales y normativos que hoy determinan la vida laboral de las mujeres que forman parte del servicio exterior de distintos países. Así, nos es posible evaluar los avances que cada uno ha logrado. También nos aportó lecciones para enfrentar los desafíos que en gran parte del mundo permanecen.

LUNES 24 DE OCTUBRE

MODERADORA: EMB. MARIA LEISSNER
EMBAJADORA SUECA PARA LA DEMOCRACIA

TEMA: RELACIONES DE PODER ENTRE GÉNEROS
RELATIONS OF POWER BETWEEN GENDERS

Emb. Maria Leissner



Dear friends,

I would like you to respond to the following questions:

A. Male ruling techniques

Having read the link about these techniques, do you have experiences of your own that may have been one or more of these techniques? Can you give examples?

B. How does your partner cope with your diplomatic career, and what lesson have you learned that you want to share?

Queridas amigas,

Voy a usar inglés para la introducción y las preguntas, pero pueden comunicarse conmigo en castellano también.

Power relations between men and women is a topic with many aspects. As a woman with a background in diplomacy as well as politics, I have experienced many of these aspects, but intend to focus on the following:

A. Male ruling techniques

B. How your husband copes with your diplomatic career

C. Problems relating to men leading women and women leading men respectively (if possible, I will develop this topic further on Friday)

Male ruling techniques is an area first defined and highlighted by Berit Ås, a Norwegian psychologist who already in 1976 defined five major ways in which men dominate women. Ruling techniques can of course be used by anyone in a dominating group who wishes to keep their position, but is normally referred to when talking about ways that women are being dominated or diminished.

1. Making a person invisible
2. Belittle a person through ridiculing her
3. Withholding information
4. Double punishment: damn you if you do, damn you if you don't
5. Making a person feel guilt and shame

Later, two other aspects have been added:

6. Objectifying a person
7. Violence or threat of violence

Please read the following resume in English in Wikipedia about the master suppression or ruling techniques:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master_suppression_techniques

B. Your husband coping with your diplomatic career

Men all over the world normally have problems adjusting to a family setup where the wife is the one defining the conditions for the family life. Even in otherwise gender balanced countries such as Sweden, women in diplomacy face this somewhat different situation that most of their sisters do not. How

does a husband cope with the fact that he may not be the breadwinner during a posting abroad, but instead play the part of the housewife? How does he cope with having to interrupt his own career for a few years? How does he cope with being the one taking more care of the children? With not being in control even over in what country the family is to live? And not let this hurt his masculinity?

One needs to carefully choose the father of one's children if a diplomatic career is to be a smooth ride...

Some men are able to cope at least for a few years, taking turns with the wife on who is driving the train.

Other men simply do not accept, but stay at home, or come to visit from time to time, leaving the women resolving all practical issues concerning the children.

And others again give up on the relationship.

Lastly, there are men who love it, having an interesting life and an admirable wife.

In what ways do women in diplomacy deal with these different situations?

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Min. Mabel Gómez Oliver

Throughout my career, I have certainly faced in several occasions some of the male techniques that Maria brings to the table. When a male is conducting a meeting, for example, I have been ignored when he asks for comments to a specific idea or proposal, addressing directly to his male peers. Some other times, being the only woman at the table and being in a senior position than my male colleagues present in the room, I've been asked to make copies for everyone, or send a fax, pass messages to the person leading the meeting, or even go outside the room to call someone or get a document. Furthermore, when I have approached a particular group of male colleagues speaking, I have experienced the immediate silence once I've arrived, as if I did not have the stature, seniority or even discretion to participate in the conversation.

Emb. Maria Leissner

Mabel, you have shared several classic examples of the master suppression techniques. The first example is about technique number 1, making invisible. You describe how you were ignored when the male speaker was talking to and looking at the other men at the table, as if you were completely invisible.

A counterstrategy to the making invisible-technique, proposed by a group of female researchers in Sweden, is to demand to be heard or seen, to take space. It can be done with humour and a joke, or with an unemotional comment about asking the group to actually listen to what you have to say/ be given the floor, or with a question, or any other way of assuming space in a natural way, giving a direct verbal response to having been made invisible and demanding respect without accusing or being angry.

Your second example is unfortunately not uncommon, you were belittled and robbed of your status, pushed into a serving position where some men prefer to see women rather than as equals or even superiors. I am not sure whether this should be viewed as technique no 1 or 2, making invisible or ridiculing, perhaps somewhere in between.

The proposed counterstrategy to the ridiculing technique is not to fall in the trap behaving as a victim accepting the shame and ridicule, but instead act from an imagined - and real - position of you as a woman who is competent, professional, strong and demanding space. Stop the conversation and ask for the ridiculing to be explained but in a cold and logical way. Pose questions, for example repeating word by word what was said, asking for an explanation: Would you be so kind and explain why you would want me to make coffee, or "I'm sorry, did I understand you correctly..." or "Excuse me, did you say you wanted me to copy these documents?"

The third I am sure has also been experienced by many of us, the withholding of information (principle 3) and excluding women from information or decision-making.

The counter strategy is to ask for all the facts and demand to have them on the table, referring to the necessity that all must have access to the information, not just a few. If it is a repeated problem, do not hesitate to bring it up with your superior. Demand more time if you have received the information later than the others.

The point with discussing these and other suppression techniques is first to recognize them, which will make you realize there is nothing wrong with you as you may otherwise believe. Secondly to discuss them with others in order to create an awareness, making the techniques visible, and thirdly to define a way of breaking these negative patterns in an organisation through devising counterstrategies and identifying techniques for achieving a culture of respect and inclusion to replace the techniques of domination.

Min. Mabel Gómez Oliver

In addition, something very frustrating that has happened to me with some male bosses is the fact of not having being recognized as the author of a specific proposal or initiative that, in some cases, has even helped to overcome difficulties or an impasse in the negotiations table. Moreover, from time to time, far from being recognized, my idea or proposal has been adjudicated to other colleague or worst, to the boss itself. Of course, I have assumed this kind of experiences with no objection, considering them as part of the "behind the scene" role that many times we have to play in our job. But this assumption is not free from some sort of frustration.

Emb. Maria Leissner

Mabel, this is very, very frustrating. It happens all the time of course, and not only with women. There are several ways to try and tackle this, but no really good answer.

You will need to publicly claim, in diplomatic ways or not, your "motherhood" of the proposal or initiative. One way might be recounting at the table in a neutral way how the idea was born (starting with you) and then taken up and developed by others. You may also simply refer to "as I proposed when we started this meeting", or explain how you came up with the idea in a very sunny tone as if your boss actually had given you credit for it, or any way you can find to in a non-victimized and non-aggressive way claim authorship.

Does anyone else have better proposals, please come forward and share them. How did you do?

You might find the following link interesting:

http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2011/10/four_ways_women_stunt_their_careers.html?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter#.TqaiPX-Pc34.email

Emb. Maria Leissner

Mabel Gomez Oliver shared her frustration about:

"Not having being recognized as the author of a specific proposal or initiative that, in some cases, has even helped to overcome difficulties or an impasse in the negotiations table. Moreover, from time to time, far from being recognized, my idea or proposal has been adjudicated to other colleague or worst, to the boss itself."

I think all of us, women as well as men (but definitively more women!), have experienced this situation. I don't have a good answer on what counter strategy one may use.

Please pitch in, and tell us how you have chosen to deal with this classic case of invisibilization!

Emb. Maria Leissner

Dear friends,

I will recommend you to read the following link if you are interested in counter strategies to the master suppression techniques, developed by a group of Swedish academics. It is quite brief and very constructive.

http://www.ecosanres.org/pdf_files/Gender_workshop_2010/Resources/Amneus_et_al_2004_Validation_techniques_counter_strategies.pdf

Comment sent by Graciela Gómez, from the Direction General for North America

First, let me express my satisfaction on participating in this forum. I am looking forward to a rich exchange of opinions and experiences.

On Male ruling techniques: I agree with the techniques presented by Ås, and although things are changing in diplomacy, it seems as if the rule 4 “Damned If You Do And Damned If You Don’t” is as valid as ever.

In the past, many women willing to go into diplomacy were forced to “choose” between pursuing a successful career and having a fulfilling personal/family life. Not so long ago, as we learnt in the readings, foreign services around the world did not allow women to marry and in Mexico, diplomats had to be granted permissions to marry foreign citizens.

Successful and result-driven women are criticized for being “not feminine enough” and women who try to explore a female-style of leadership are often considered less committed than their male counterparts. When short-listed for promotions, mothers of young kids are perceived as less willing to work longer hours and therefore they make more efforts to make themselves available, even if this implies less quality-time with their families… Damned If You Do And Damned If You Don’t!!!

Another example of the “invisibility” that I have experienced is when diplomats from certain countries refuse to recognize you as their pair on religious/cultural grounds. Even when foreign services around the world are making efforts to overturn this practice by appointing women for senior diplomatic roles in those countries, the fact stays that they may not be able to have access to the inner circles wherein only men are allowed.

Emb. Maria Leissner

Dear Graciela,

The fourth technique, "double bind" or Damned if you do, damned if you don't, is unfortunately still very much alive in all of our countries. What you bring up, shame on women who choose a career while they have small children, guilt when they try to do their job well and to top it off being overlooked for promotion when it is wrongfully assumed you will not do your job professionally because of family duties, is an experience of millions and millions of us all over the world.

What one can do is to demand transparency in the process of selection since this kind of arguments does not look well in daylight. If selection processes after that still are not handled professionally, and are not based solely on competence and experience, you may have to question the integrity of the process and take a fight.

On femininity, some of us choose a feminine style and that can be quite powerful. Others choose a more neutral style, and that, too, can be quite powerful. It all depends on your personality. What is important is to always behave as if you were completely confident, strong and certain of being seen, respected and included, and show great surprise (even if you are not surprised...), without resorting to the role of a victim, when you are not treated as the very competent professionals you indeed are. We have the right to be feminine (respecting the dress code of course), and we also have the right of not being feminine!!! And some of us like to do both depending on the situation and on your mood ;)

If you spoke to a stylist, she would probably tell you to find a good middle ground. When I was elected leader of my party, I took the advice of a stylist and started dressing in skirts and jacket (having been a pants person), using more shining earrings and a little more makeup, striving at the appearance of a professional slightly feminine business woman. The aim was to not make people think about anything else than what was coming out of my mouth, but unconsciously having a slightly positive feeling about my appearance. This is now 15 years ago, and perhaps today there is a wider spectrum of what is seen as professional and appetizing. Because, in the end, it is really boring if we all have to look the same....

Lastly, your invisibility example is one that too often is overlooked but a difficult reality in the diplomatic world, thank you for bringing that up. I have myself been in situations, for example in Afghanistan, where I have stretched out my hand to introduce myself to a conservative leader who blatantly refused to grasp my hand and return the greeting. My mistake. I have now reconciled with this, accepting to wait for the conservative person to demonstrate how he wants to salute me, and then go on to business. As long as you are respected in your professional role, that is.

Your example however is about not being professionally respected but excluded, and that is indeed more difficult. This is a problem that needs to be dealt with in the ways you mention yourself: not accepting that conservative and claimed religiously motivated values in the leadership of certain countries is forcing other countries to fall into the same pattern, but instead holding on to your own values demanding respect for them including full and equal access for female ambassadors.

Min. Mabel Gómez Oliver

I am very fortunate to have a spouse who fully supports me and my career, and who has been there, next to me, whenever I have needed him, including as a loving and responsible father, and housekeeper. I deem his attitude as a mature, loving and outstanding one, that has unfortunately meant for him sacrificing his own career. He does not complain at all about his role as a supportive spouse of a woman diplomat, but in a macho society, he has to encounter all kind of nasty comments regarding his dependent status. In the macho societies, the stereotype indicates that it is the woman who sacrifices her career and is her husband the one who succeeds professionally. Being on the other side of the aisle sometimes puts him in front of stupid questions and comments in reference to his "unemployed" or dependent status.

On the other hand, he has also witnessed that in the diplomatic environment, macho attitudes have no nationality. Several times, when both of us have been welcoming guests in the receiving line for a diplomatic reception, he is the one who is greeted as the diplomat, whereas I am considered his accompanying spouse. This happened in such an international environment as Geneva, where I happened to be posted as Deputy Ambassador, so he was the one who was called "Mr. Ambassador".

Emb. Yanerit Morgan

As my colleague Amb. Mabel Gómez, I have a very committed spouse with me, my family and my career. It was not an easy task for us to accomplish so many years together, 25, but it was possible because he is a very open minded person. We share responsibilities, but I am the head of my family because for him is difficult to get a stable job when we are moving to one place to another. In some diplomatic circles, he is discriminated, because people do not understand why he is not the main provider of the family and in the other hand some men colleagues invite only him to some social gatherings that are only for men. This kind of discrimination is more visible when the woman gets a higher post such as an Ambassador and more even when your country of destination is very conservative. In any case with

such responsibility I always make my point and try to be very clear that any discriminatory action against me is against my country.

Emb. Maria Leissner

Thank you for your great example. I know exactly what you are talking about. When I was posted as an ambassador abroad, I was myself a widow, and did not have to cope with that situation (instead, I took over the jobs of both my predecessor and his wife), but I have had many colleagues from other countries facing the same problem. The husband of a woman ambassador often finds himself in a limbo, not being invited to the "ladies luncheons" or *Damas diplomáticas* gatherings (or if he is, he will feel like a UFO...) and not being counted in male ambassadorial circles. It takes a strong man to endure that situation, and to carve out a good life for himself in spite of being a UFO!

Many of my colleagues at the Swedish Ministry witness how their husbands, if they don't have children at home, prefer not to accompany them, or come only to visit for limited periods of time. Some colleagues have to cut their stay shorter than envisaged because of the husband's frustration. One family I know sold their house, basically threw out the children (who were leaving home anyway), went off to the post both of them but after a couple of months the husband returned home - without reassembling the family - living on his own in an apartment while his wife worked hard and alone on her post. You are very, very lucky!

But there is an increasing number of these strong men, and with time there will not be any *damas diplomáticas* gatherings but spouses gatherings.

Let us all remember when we are posted to invite both in the couple, men or women diplomats with spouses, to our diplomatic events whether they are more social or more political in character. I know I should have been more

inclusive to both male and female spouses during my posting, and I will rectify that on my next.

Comment sent by Marcela Celorio, from the Embassy of Mexico in Israel

I would like to share with you the following experience: I was posted abroad when I got the news that my former husband (with the rank of an Ambassador) was going to be posted in the same Embassy as Deputy Chief of Mission. I asked the current Undersecretary to consider my case (I knew that I could be easily posted somewhere else and it didn't represent any extra burden to the Foreign Service). The transfer was denied. The arguments were that it was me the one that got married to a diplomat and it was me the one that divorced. So, I was the one to blame and I had to assume the costs. Fortunately, I am very professional and I had a civilized and extraordinary relationship with my former husband so, at the end, staying in the same Embassy wasn't a problem. What this situation made me feel was not only that if I want to be professional I am not able to have a personal relationship with another Mexican Diplomat but also I felt the weight of the hierarchy. I would appreciate your comments on this.

Regarding the second question, I must tell that so far the rules at the Mexican Foreign Service make it very hard for two diplomats to be together abroad. There are just few places where they can live together. So, as long as you work at the Ministry in Mexico City there is no problem, the problem starts when you are posted abroad, and I ask myself what is the Foreign Service for if not representing your country? So, I have been learning that the emotional drain comes with the territory...

Emb. Anne Lammila

Dear all,

Sorry for joining you so late. I just came back from a trip to wonderful city of Oaxaca, a trip organized by the SRE. I now start commenting on the first panel.

My answers to your questions, Maria:

A) I have to say that quite honestly I have not experienced the male techniques mentioned in your links. Maybe it is due to the fact that there are so many women working in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland nowadays. In my diplomatic course we were 18 women and 7 men. As a matter of fact, we named ourselves "the future moms of the Foreign Service" and indeed most of us ladies have had babies during the service. I myself have had three kids while in service.

Since years there have been many more female applicants to Foreign Service than men, and also the percentage of women entering the Ministry has been bigger. Nowadays there are women on all levels including the highest posts. In nominations gender is not a decisive factor. For example in our Embassy in Washington there is a female Ambassador, Deputy Head of Mission, Head of Political Section and Head of Economic Sector. In this year's Ambassadorial meeting there were 42 women out of 103 participants. In the future, most probably there will be more women in the diplomatic career than men.

The problems that you all describe are familiar to me through the stories of an older generation of women that have worked in the Finnish Foreign Ministry. We had our first female Ambassador in 1958 but it was after 1965 that there were more women entering into the Ministry. The first ones had hard times. Our first UN Ambassador, Marjatta Rasi, mentioned in one panel that his former colleague Sergei Lavrov had been skeptical about her being the permanent representative and said: "I thought that the UN mattered for Finland...".

B) I have been lucky also with my husband. He is a journalist and writer and he has always been able to work abroad. We met in Brazil while he was a free lance journalist writing to a Finnish weekly magazine and since then he has followed me to Madrid, Paris, Washington and now to Mexico. For him

this life style has suited very well. While in Finland he has continued to work for the same papers than abroad. Right now when printed media is in crisis it is harder for him to sell his articles, but he is still doing alright.

My husband has been supportive towards my career and I am grateful for that. Nevertheless, I have also "saved" him what regards social events. I have gone alone to most cocktails and receptions and asked him to join me only for the most important events. I think that would be my advice. You have to leave your spouse to have his own professional ambitions and not ask him to do too much. Taking care of our children and home has been our mutual task, not more of his than mine. By no means has he played the part of the housewife. In many occasions, he has actually been the one who has earned more.

While kids were small I stayed home for four years altogether. In the Finnish system – also in the Swedish – this is totally possible because we have a paid leave of absence. I might have had a bit slower career but I don't regret that. I have also tried to apply for posts that have suited my family situation, eg. not too much travelling when kids were small, and I have been able to get that type of jobs. What comes to my female colleagues, there are many of them who have had a hard job and small kids at the same time. One of my close colleagues said that women with small kids are good in working late hours because they know how to cope with little sleeping hours... She was the Antici in the European Union Representation at that time.

I know that I am an exception. In most cases, it is hard to combine the two careers. But this is true to men and women, and not easier for women that leave their jobs and follow their husbands abroad. The essential thing is to create conditions where families feel well abroad. More about that tomorrow.

Comment sent by Jacqueline Morán, from the Embassy of Mexico in Ecuador

Unfortunately, and without surprises, we can say that diplomat women face and deal with a *machista* culture. I agree that there have been some changes in attitudes, behaviors, gender quotes, etc. However, we continue facing the same problems that other women do regarding stereotypes, discrimination and violence, since violence is not only physical, but also psychological. Being female, on a daily and diplomatic basis, I have experienced some or all the male ruling techniques described by Berit As. I agree that not all diplomats experience the same things, but sometimes we are not so lucky to have supportive bosses or colleagues. Furthermore, when we are young, our age and gender –as Madeleine Albright said– seem to frequently betray our position. Almost nobody considers that we could make decisions or we are asked by our bosses to help as hostesses in social events, but not to be part of the negotiations. Even if we are allowed to make decisions, people want to hear the “final word” given by a man not for a young woman dressed in a fancy way. Or what about when we are asked to give in private our impressions and opinions regarding a topic, but we are not invited to attend the meetings? Or when we are promoted and our colleagues –including women– say that we got a better position because we had an affair with our boss? Obviously, this resistance is based on males’ prejudicial attitudes towards females, and, sometimes, related or supported by the hierarchy that we must obey according to the rules of the Foreign Service.

Regarding the personal life of female diplomats, we should ask ourselves how gender affects our attitude towards relationships and what do we want in a relationship.

Comment sent by Margarita Flores, from the Embassy of Mexico in South Africa

Es un honor compartir este foro con mujeres de excelente trayectoria y destacadas funcionarias. Comparto dos de mis experiencias con ustedes respecto a este tema. En una de mis adscripciones en el exterior, padecí frecuentemente la “retención de información”. En dicha adscripción, era la única mujer dentro del grupo de funcionarios, lo que significó para mí ser excluida de cierto tipo de actividades, pues entre tanto caballero, no era “bienvenida” en sus planes para salir a tomar una copa al finalizar las labores o los viernes en las noches. Muchas de las decisiones relativas al trabajo se tomaban o decidían en esos momentos, y generalmente no era informada. Cuando me daba cuenta de esto y preguntaba a mis superiores o compañeros cuándo había sido acordada tal o cual cosa, no se disculpaban, sólo decían “ah, es cierto que tú no estabas cuando acordamos esto. Para la próxima deberías de irte de copas con nosotros para enterarte de las cosas”.

Respecto a mi pareja, afortunadamente es diplomático también y aunque tiene un rango menor al mío, eso no ha sido motivo de conflicto alguno. Todo lo contrario, entiende perfectamente que tengo responsabilidades que atender y que muchas veces eso me impide compartir más tiempo con la familia. Él se hace perfectamente cargo de todo.

It is an honor to share this forum with women that have an excellent career and distinguished officials. I will share two of my experiences with you regarding this topic. In one of the countries where I was appointed, I frequently suffered from "withholding of information". In that country, I was the only woman in the group of officers, which meant that I was excluded from certain activities, for, among so many gentlemen, I wasn't "welcome" in their plans to go out for a drink after work or on Friday nights. Many work-related decisions were made during those moments, and, generally, I wasn't informed. When I realized this and asked my superiors or peers when had certain thing been agreed on, they didn't apologize, they just said "ah, it's true that you weren't there when we agreed that. Next time you should go out for drinks with us so that you can find out".

Regarding my partner, fortunately he is also a diplomat and, although he has a lower rank than mine, that has been motive of no conflict. On the contrary, he understands perfectly that I have duties to carry out and that it often prevents me from sharing more time with my family. He handles everything perfectly.

Comment sent by Ximena Gómez Chávez, from the Mexican Consulate in Santa Ana, US

Being a young diplomat who recently joined the Foreign Service I deeply appreciate the interest of my colleagues to discuss the current role of female diplomats and how do gender relations have evolved through time in an effort to identify common grounds that help us improve our performance not only at the professional level but also at the personal level involving themes such as maternity and affective relationships.

Referring to master suppression techniques I guess I've been lucky enough to say that in a historically *machista* society, I've found an encouraging environment among a male-dominated Foreign Service. So far I've been respected and recognized by men who have much more experience than me and I guess this is part of a changing world which has witnessed an increasing participation of women in decision-making processes. But what really worries me the most of these domination techniques is the fact that women are applying them on other women, a strategy that sometimes might have a double effect, because female officers tend to play tougher than men, maybe in an attempt to portray a strong figure that can't be defeated. Unfortunately this kind of behavior is much more common than I thought; a lot of my colleagues have experienced subjugation even from their female co-workers who are not willing to accept new generations, I suppose because they feel threatened at some point. Could you share some thoughts on this?

Regarding on how my partner copes with my diplomatic career I don't have too much to say. I am single at the moment but it is inevitable to think how marriage or even a serious relationship survives when stability is at stake every single time you move from one place to another in the advancement of your career. This question arose by the time I decided to become a diplomat, especially in a context where gender roles at least in the Mexican culture continue to be dictated by what a woman and what a man should do. In that sense, the following question comes to my mind: Have some of you ever thought to give up your career to pursue of a more traditional lifestyle? And if so, how did you handle it? How did you manage to keep going?

Comment sent by Graciela Gómez, from the Direction General for North America

B. How does your partner cope with your diplomatic career

Thank you, Mabel for sharing your experiences. It is intriguing how men could see even senior diplomats like you as support staff. I also appreciate Amb. Leissner's advice on how to deal with the suppression techniques in a constructive way.

On the subject of partners, my advice is to choose wisely and from a position of equality. If you value your career the person you love will appreciate it as well but if you start by undermining your dreams and ambitions it is unlikely that your partner will even consider them as important as his own. Ambassadors Gómez & Morgan have clearly stated how important it is to have supporting, committed and loving partners.

I was a junior diplomat when I first met my husband. We have been together for 16 years, married for 14 and we have four kids together. He always knew what my career meant for me and being European, he had less prejudices than his Latin counterparts about marrying a professional woman. We decided to face the challenge in a creative way and we have taken turns to promote our careers. During our first posting together I supported him in

“reinventing” his professional path in order to make it more compatible with diplomatic life. He completed his Doctorate and started a successful consulting as an Executive Coach.

He is a very successful person in his own right, with an internationally-oriented career and a portfolio of clients in three continents. Our kids are used to our “special” model of family and hopefully they will grow into citizens of the world.

I am convinced that I wouldn’t have been able to stay in this career if I hadn’t had a fulfilled yet supportive husband who embraced diplomacy as our common project and life-style.

However, our choices have come at a cost. We rely on two full-time nannies to help with childcare for the past eight years and our family has faced criticism and prejudice.

Personally, I feel empowered to confront unfair rules and institutional practices because I have the support of a great partner.

Questions sent by Guadalupe García, from the Delegation of the Foreign Ministry at Estado de México

Cuando una mujer se desempeña en el Servicio Exterior Mexicano, y por razones de trabajo se ve en la necesidad de cambiar de país, en el cual su esposo y sus hijos se encuentran gozando de una vida estable, ¿a que le dan prioridad, a la familia o al trabajo?

¿Cómo afronta una mujer diplomática el hecho de que su esposo se quede desempleado, toda vez que al cambiar de país él no pueda ejercer su profesión? ¿Cómo afronta por un lado la frustración de su esposo por dejar

su profesión y por otro lado el agradecimiento de que su esposo acepte seguirla por amor?

¿Es necesario que las mujeres diplomáticas dominen los idiomas de todos los países a los que son transferidas, o basta con que dominen el inglés como idioma base?

When a woman is working at the Mexican Foreign Service, and for work reasons she must change her country of residence, but her husband and children are enjoying a stable life, which is your priority, family or work?

How does a woman diplomat deal with the fact that her husband is unemployed, since he won't be able to work in another country? How does she deal, on one hand, with her husband's frustration and, on the other, with thanking her husband's acceptance to follow her out of love?

Is it necessary for women diplomats to know the language of every country they are transferred to or knowing English is enough?

Comment sent by María Noemí Hernández, from the Embassy of Mexico in France

When a woman is working at the Mexican Foreign Service, and for work reasons she must change her country of residence, but her husband and children are enjoying a stable life, which is your priority, family or work?

- The Mexican Foreign Service Law requires that every transferred member to move to the new post within 60 days from the notification. The non compliance may trigger a termination procedure.

How does a woman diplomat deal with the fact that her husband is unemployed, since he won't be able to work in another country? How does she deal, on one hand, with her husband's frustration and, on the other, with thanking her husband's acceptance to follow her out of love?

- Some countries grant work permits to the trailing spouse. In the other cases, the best is to find educational opportunities (masters, doctorate, and language courses) along with the very important tasks of finding a house, and schools for the children. With very young children, the temporary unemployment of one spouse may be a blessing, more than a frustration, given the high costs for daycare and the anxiety of leaving a baby in non-familiar-arms.

Is it necessary for women diplomats to know the language of every country they are transferred to or knowing English is enough?

-The Mexican Foreign Service requires mastering Spanish and one foreign language, as well as the ability to translate a second foreign language, any of the other United Nations official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian.

Some Mexican diplomats are able to work in Japanese, Farsi, German, Vietnamese, Italian and other languages, which is helpful, but not mandatory.

Comment sent by Micaela Liberato, from the Embassy of Mexico in New Zealand

First of all, I would like to express my satisfaction and gratitude to have been accepted to participate in this interesting forum and to have the opportunity to learn about how other Ministries deal with women related issues.

Regarding on how does my partner cope with my diplomatic career I have to say that I, also consider myself lucky, as my husband of 24 years has followed me in three of my five postings I had so far and he has been a wonderful father and husband. However, it hasn't been easy for him, as he has had to learn languages like Polish, to be able to work, as a doctor, as well as a language teacher, and at the same time he has been the one who has mostly cared for our daughter, as father and doctor, and for language reasons, he has had to deal with the household matters, with the nannies and organising everything when we arrived to a new country. In one sentence, I couldn't have made it without him.

I have no regrets to have worked for the Mexican Foreign Service for almost thirty years. Unfortunately, I consider that my husband has scarified/missed to have a great career and, at the end of the day, we are living at the moment in different countries, but hoping to retire soon to be reunited again.

I have sometimes joked to young unmarried diplomats, to look for a partner, who is a writer or an artist, so they can keep working anywhere their spouses are posted.

Comment sent by Ana Luisa Fajer, from the Mexican Consulate in Saint Paul

Regarding invisibility, I think one of the worse situations I have faced in my diplomatic career so far, is having to accept I was invisible to a colleague of the Mexican Foreign Service. Fortunately, I think this is an exception to the rule (I sincerely hope). I was appointed as Director General for Africa and the Middle East being Second Secretary according to the Foreign Service ranks. I might have had skills to be in that position, but certainly “I had not the proper rank” to occupy that division. It was a woman, the Deputy Secretary of Foreign Affairs, who took the risk and appointed me as a DG while being a Second Secretary. This situation caused real trouble to many of my colleagues, mainly men, and particularly those in the upper ranks. One of them, in particular, was an advisor to the Deputy Secretary of Foreign Affairs, and an Ambassador himself. Invariably, he did not see me, nor listen to me, and skipped me when it was my turn to talk in a meeting. At that time, I felt I was the one to blame because I was a Second Secretary, not deserving to be a DG at all. It took me hours of therapy... My self esteem was severely affected. I did not trust myself, or my capabilities. Together with him, there was a woman, another woman who joined efforts with him to make life very difficult for me. He finally left, but the woman stayed. Today, I know I empowered her by being afraid of her. I still remember those times as a nightmare. Only until I left that position, I could recuperate my strengths, and be aware of my skills and values. I had to invest many hours, many days and nights fighting against both of them, a man and a woman, both diplomats, both colleagues.

Comment sent by María Noemí Hernández, from the Embassy of France in Mexico

A. Male ruling techniques

1. Making a person invisible

This technique is not only used by men, it is also used by women, against women. In our line of work, copyrights will not help much. We need to trust our ideas to superiors and coworkers, and at the same time, we need to pass a clear message of who is the author.

About the other techniques of male ruling, I do believe the worst problem we may have in the diplomatic career is that women do not even talk about being victims of these ruling techniques. The worst cases arise when there has been physical violence or aggression and women believe they have to be silent in order to avoid risks to their career. I strongly believe that it should be part of our commitment as women helping women to open and favor lines of communication aiming to avoid this kind of abuses.

B. How your husband copes with your diplomatic career

A trailing spouse (men and women) will experience hardships in personal, social, and material ways. Sometimes their career will suffer; their contributions to their own retirement are small or inexistent, their preferences for weather and language will be ignored, but if they are determined to be part of their families, they take all the disadvantages, and contribute in their very special way to change the world and offer their children a different vision of society.

We, diplomat women have made the choice of our career, but we have also to assume to some extent the responsibility to minimize the “collateral damages” which may be inflicted to our spouses and children. This is applicable to men in diplomacy too. In some occasions, we need to find unorthodox, less than comfortable compromises to accommodate our families’ needs because neither diplomatic careers nor life are smooth rides.

Comment sent by Jacqueline Morán, from the Embassy of Mexico in Ecuador

Even all the good experiences that we could know about being a diplomat female and a married woman, the truth is that the Foreign Service is not an easy job, and a huge percentage of diplomat females are single, divorced, or single-mothers. Perhaps it is because *macho* ideas prevail and the social opinion against men that don’t work.

We have a career based on competition, and a demanding schedule that request us to be available 24 hours a week. Therefore, we cannot assure certainty to our families who need to change their routines, schemes, and dreams. All of these factors make more difficult to combine these two aspects. It is not impossible, but it is not so easy like it seems to be. Of course, the laws have been changing and some developed countries have made incredible changes to support the professional career of diplomat women and their private lives as mothers. But the most important is the way that we try to combine these two responsibilities, and the support that we could have of our bosses who need to understand that being mother does not mean that we are not capable of having a full time job.

The World Economic Forum will release its report today. Despite the progress done by some countries, it states that the global gender gap remains. It also establishes that Norway, Finland and Iceland are the most advanced in gender equality, including political empowerment. The United States is in the seventeenth place. According to the experts, countries have to work harder to really offer equal conditions to women in all sectors. So, I would like to ask to the expositors: in your opinion, what are the most significant changes that the Mexican Foreign Service has made to empower us? And which are the next steps to be taken?

Comment sent by Susana Garduño, from the Embassy of Mexico in Great Britain

Since this is my first posting, let me begin by expressing my delight on having this exchange with wonderful women diplomats that have already set a footmark and opened spaces in the Mexican diplomatic sphere as well as abroad. I guess we will have to follow and enrich this path in our own possibilities, but no doubt you have set a high standard!

I have to say that since I read the first questions, particularly the “Male Ruling Techniques” I already felt I was not alone in my thoughts and that there was already a thorough study of a situation that I have experienced in different stages of my professional career, but more clearly in the last year.

One of my current responsibilities is to follow on the international organizations based in London, and most of them, have historically been integrated solely by men. For them to interact with women is just on an assistant (typing secretary) level or with girls helping at cafeterias, therefore the “making the person invisible” or the “withholding information” techniques were a day-to-day for me. I have been able to counteract the situation by overcoming my own fear to rejection and be present as any other country representative in any given meeting, lunch and/or reception and, additionally, by teaming with fellow gender diplomats who have the same roles (not more than five). I particularly identify with the situations portrayed by Amb. Mabel Gomez (congratulations on the recent appointment!) of a complete silence once a woman enters a room and even having to stand against them when they make fun of our gender, such as proposing the women not as Chairmen (or chairladies) of a particular meeting but as “Miss Something” as if it was just for the looks and not for the professional abilities!

As well the frustration of listening to your own idea in the voice of a boss that is taking it as their own is not very stimulating, but I try to think that it was good in the first place, otherwise he wouldn't repeat it, but as you said, I think the important lesson of this is to recognize the situation “which will make you realize there is nothing wrong with you as you may otherwise believe”.

On the second and very important personal matter, I have to share that I had a stable relationship which endured my first posting, but somehow it couldn't cope with the second assignment abroad, therefore I do hope the number of this “strong men” is growing because I do believe that as any human being, it is important to have an equilibrium in your life.

Comment sent by Marcela Celorio, from the Embassy of Mexico in Israel

Dear Ambassador Leissner,

Following Ana Luisa's last post, I would like to say that, unfortunately, Master suppression techniques are well used also by our women colleagues. I remember being very happy to know that a woman was appointed in a very important position, a position that will allow her to help other women. Nevertheless, the opposite happened. Being younger or smarter or prettier during her ruling meant that there were no opportunities and to be excluded. So, my question is, how can we deal with other women than instead of being supportive threaten your career and make your life miserable? I know as Madeleine Albright said "...there is a special place in hell for women who don't help each other..." but while we are here, what should we do?

Comment sent by Claudia García, from the Embassy of Mexico in Poland

Dear Ambassador Lammila and dear colleagues,

Thank you all for sharing your experiences. In my case being a woman diplomat has been a challenging but very rewarding career. I am mother of Valentina, a baby-girl of 10 months old, who has changed very positively my perspective of life!

I am totally convinced that we should promote in our Mexican Foreign Service better and more supportive conditions for pregnant and mother diplomats. For example, in my case, I had to work until the last day of pregnancy to enjoy more time with my baby once she was born (3 months according to the Mexican legislation). My lovely husband has been very helpful taking care of my baby when I travel or when I have work commitments at night, but as he also works, my parents are taking care of Valentina during our working hours, since in Poland babies are not accepted in day care until they are 2 years old and to find a reliable babysitter that at least speaks English is almost an impossible task.

We also need a more sensible approach in Mexico to women's needs during pregnancy, breastfeeding and when our children are little since visits to the

doctors are frequent, we need time during work for expressing breast milk or flexibility to work at home when our kids are ill.

Among other things, our law should consider also the option of “parental leave” as it is envisaged in the legislation of other countries like Norway. In this way, both mother and father would have the right to spend time with the new baby and would contribute to the objective of work and family balance.

Comment sent by Tania Rión Peña, from the Undersecretary for North America’s Office

I think that we as women have a double responsibility when it comes to professional issues. First of all we have to prove that we are capable and intelligent, and not only pretty faces or “the wife of” or “the friend of”, of course that happens to men as well, but it’s more common in our case. And then, we have to prove that we are also capable of being good mothers and wives without leaving the professional issues aside. It is true that nowadays men have a more active role at home, but I think that many bosses still doubt that we are capable of doing both things at the same time. I am single and with no children, but I really admire my colleagues who can combine both activities, because it’s not easy. It requires a double effort that sometimes is not recognized by our colleagues, being men or women.

And I agree with Marcela Celorio’s comment about women in positions of power. It is true that it is harder for us to prove that we are capable of being in those positions, but it doesn’t mean that we have to be mean and try to neutralize other women around us. One thing that I admire from men is the “gender solidarity (*solidaridad de género*)”, because they support each other no matter what. We should be doing the same thing and help each other instead of trying to block other women because we see them as “competition”.

Comment sent by Beatriz Nava from the Embassy of Mexico in Singapore

I appreciate a lot the introduction to the Master suppression techniques. We have all experienced/heard of them but I didn't know there was a whole analytical framework developed for their identification.

I have personally experienced the making invisible technique together with the withholding of information technique, which coupled with a lower rank in a hierarchical system, can be a very bad combination. It was very surprising, however, to read Ambassador Gómez experiences which demonstrate that these techniques are applied regardless of seniority within the hierarchy, which emphasizes that this phenomenon is deeply rooted in gender (although, as it was mentioned as well, discrimination does occur to men, as in the case of male spouses of diplomat women).

I have faced situations where I approach to talk to male diplomats of higher ranks in a social gathering and, of course, my opinions are nuanced by my age and rank (as Ximena, I also joined the service in the previous promotion, so I hold the rank of Third Secretary as of now), so my counterparts tend to return that "oh, how sweet" look in their eyes instead of taking my words seriously. Indeed I have always taken the nerve to join conversations with senior officials, and I try not to be intimidated by that look/attitude, but it is very annoying indeed. In my previous job as a consultant for UNIDO, the crucial decisions of the working group tended to be taken among the staff members (all men) and the consultants (all women) were taken out of the picture very often. That was an international team so the suppression techniques know no national boundaries.

Fortunately I haven't experienced the master suppression techniques in my current posting. Today, being the only woman member of the Foreign Service, I have been given (and have taken care of requesting) my place in the Embassy. My opinions are respected and my work, recognized. I have a very experienced Ambassador running the place, with more than 40 years of experience in the service, who has a profound respect for women and is sensitive to his staff personal preoccupations and context, which is not common. I am very fortunate. Certainly it is very encouraging to know that there is hope and not all senior male staff will apply these techniques. It is indeed a case to case situation.

Regarding the second question, I am also very fortunate to have very recently found a man that seems to be receptive and mature enough to walk hand in hand with me throughout my still incipient career where the stakes are still open and we don't know when and where to after Singapore. I am already trying not to force him to come with me to all cocktails and receptions, and regarding letting and encouraging him to have "his own professional ambitions and not ask him to do much" is an advice of pure gold. After all this is a partnership, if I ask for respect, I need to provide as well the same respect I demand.

Finally, I would also like to join Ximena in stressing the point that unfortunately more and more women apply these techniques with other fellow women, especially when arriving to senior positions, but not only. Probably in Finland or Sweden the situation is not the same (although as a trainee in the European Commission I had a female boss from the Netherlands who was extremely unsympathetic towards female colleagues and subordinates and exactly the opposite towards men), but certainly the context and vices of our Latin macho-oriented societies have heavily contributed to this phenomenon.

Hopefully more women could know how to identify and counterbalance these techniques. In any case, again, many thanks for raising our awareness towards this key subject.

MARTES 25 DE OCTUBRE

MODERADORA: EMB. YANERIT MORGAN
REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE ALTERNA DE MÉXICO ANTE LAS
NACIONES UNIDAS

TEMA: PARTICIPACIÓN DE LA MUJER EN LA MEDIACIÓN Y LOS
PROCESOS DE PAZ
WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN MEDIATION AND PEACE PROCESSES

Emb. Yanerit Morgan



Buenos días, estimadas amigas moderadoras y participantes: es un placer para mí moderar el foro el día de hoy. Estas son las preguntas sobre las cuales espero sus comentarios.

Good morning dear friends moderators and participants, it's a pleasure for me to moderate these forum. These are the questions for today.

Es un hecho que actualmente se han registrado en el mundo avances para promover la participación de la mujer en los procesos de paz, sin embargo persisten importantes obstáculos para lograr ese objetivo, ¿cuáles serían los obstáculos mas importantes en los que la comunidad internacional debe concentrar sus esfuerzos?

It is a fact that there have been important improvements in the world that allow the participation of women in peace processes. Nevertheless, there are still important obstacles to achieve these objectives. In your view, what are the main challenges in which the international community should focus its efforts on?

En situaciones de conflicto las mujeres son vistas comúnmente como las víctimas debido a su situación de vulnerabilidad. ¿En qué manera ha afectado dicha visión el papel de las mujeres como mediadoras o líderes en los procesos de paz?

In conflict situations, women are seen as victims due to their vulnerability. How do you think that condition has affected the role of women as mediators or leaders on the peace processes?

Más allá de la aportación particular que podemos realizar las mujeres a los procesos de paz, ¿cuál considera es el enfoque correcto para abordar la participación de la mujer: ¿es con base en lo que podemos aportar o para ejercer nuestro derecho a participar en igualdad de condiciones?

Beyond the specific contribution of women to peace processes, what do you think is the correct approach to deal with women's participation? Should it be based on their contribution as women or in the right of women to participate in equal conditions with men?

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Min. Mabel Gómez Oliver

Good morning, Yanerit. You pose very relevant questions that deserve careful consideration and discussion. But as a first reaction, let me start by addressing the last question. At some point, hopefully in the near future, we shouldn't be discussing what is the right approach to justify women's participation in peace processes, just as now we are not contesting men's participation. Women must participate in peace processes because they also

have the right, on equal standing as men, to contribute directly to the creation of new institutions, new laws, new mechanisms, new infrastructure, and ultimately to ensure that women will no longer be excluded from decision-making processes that affect people's life. But for the same token, women's participation in peace processes is also key and very welcome precisely because of the input and unique perspective that they bring to the negotiating table and to the peace-making processes. Usually the main victims of war, women tend to think more in terms of addressing issues that affect the society as a whole than in individualistic terms aimed at solving their own and individual situation. So, responding your last question, women's participation in peace processes is a MUST on the basis of their right to participate in all processes affecting them in equal conditions as men, but ultimately, this same participation turns to be a major ingredient contributing to a more comprehensive, democratic and inclusive peace-making process that can guarantee more stable and prosperous conditions in the future.

Min. Mabel Gómez Oliver

Moreover, the inclusion of women in peace processes ensures that their concerns, based on their own experiences under war or pre-war conditions, will be taken into consideration and will be addressed, in order to prevent the perpetuation of women's marginalization, under representation and discrimination.

Even if women and children are the ones who suffer the most, and therefore, are the main victims of war, they should not be treated as such during peace processes. Doing so would underestimate their contribution and participation as decision-makers and would place them as vulnerable individuals in need of assistance, inevitably resulting in patronizing responses that far from including women on equal standing in the peace making processes would tend to reinforce perceptions of women as being unskilled and unable to fully participate on their own right.

Comment sent by Marcela Celorio, from the Embassy of Mexico in Israel

Respecto a cuales serían los obstáculos más importantes en los que la comunidad internacional debe concentrar sus esfuerzos, considero que un aspecto importante a considerar para remover dichos obstáculos es a través de nuestro profesionalismo y capacidad en igualdad de circunstancias y oportunidades con los hombres. En ese sentido no considero que por el simple hecho de ser mujer se tenga derecho a una especie de cuota para participar en dichos procesos. Lo que sí debe buscarse es que tanto hombres y mujeres compitan en un ambiente equitativo que permita conocer quién es el mejor para desempeñar tal o cual función. Si nos ajustamos a un sistema de cuotas, puede ser contraproducente, porque no se escoge a la mejor y en lugar de contar con un liderazgo; conseguir los resultados propuestos en el proceso de paz y mediación y respeto y legitimación de nuestros interlocutores, conseguiremos que todavía más se nos marginalice y no se nos tome en cuenta.

Regarding which would be the most important obstacles in which the international community must concentrate its efforts, it is my opinion that an important aspect to consider in order to remove such obstacles is our professionalism and capacity in equal circumstances and opportunities to men. In this sense, I don't think that women (just for being women) are entitled to some kind of quota to participate in such processes. What does need to be aimed at is that women and men compete in an equitable environment that enables everyone to know who can carry out a certain duty best. Adjusting to a system of quotas might turn out counterproductive, for not the best woman is chosen, and instead of obtaining a leadership and achieving the results proposed in the peace and mediation processes, as well as respect and legitimacy from our interlocutors, we will be even more marginalized and not paid attention.

Emb. Yanerit Morgan

Estimada Marcela: Gusto en saludarte desde un país en el que el papel de la mujer en la mediación y solución de conflictos es especialmente importante y sensible. Comparto tus comentarios sobre la importancia de contar con mujeres profesionales y capaces para asumir los puestos directivos, sin embargo me parece que en ese punto ya estamos bastante aventajadas ya que en varios países son cada vez mas mujeres las que egresan de la universidad con mayores calificaciones que los hombres, no obstante a mi juicio los obstáculos sociales, menos visibles nos hacen todavía estar en posición de desventaja frente a una cultura machista. Es por ello que yo creo, como primera instancia en la necesidad de adoptar acciones afirmativas como las cuotas, no para llenarlas por llenarlas, sino para lograr un mejor equilibrio que permita avanzar mas rápido en la participación de la mujer en condiciones de igualdad con el hombre. En Naciones Unidas por ejemplo la Secretaría General ha tenido una política muy activa de acción afirmativa y en los puestos directivos ha dado preferencia a las mujeres, porque mujeres calificadas hay, lo que pasa es que en la práctica sigue habiendo muchos obstáculos que es necesario abordar. Lo dejo para el debate.

Emb. Yanerit Morgan

Thank you very much, Mabel, for your reply. I agree with you about the importance of the recognition of the right of women to participate in all aspects of the social and political life as a matter of principle. I feel that justifying the contribution of women in any area by our qualities is not the correct way to address the issue. In any case the diagnosis has to start by saying that in those aspects where the participation of women is not enough it means that the way we are confronting the situations is not right. You have described very clearly which are the main elements that women's experience can bring to the negotiation tables that are missing, when there are not women allow to participate in the peace processes.

Min. Mabel Gómez Oliver

Yanerit, you have asked what would be the main obstacles to women's participation in peace processes that the international community has to address. In this regard, I think that the lack of political empowerment is still a major obstacle. The fact that women were not part of the decisions involved during war time is followed by an automatic disregard for their participation in post-war decision making processes. Violence against women in peaceful and war periods and the lack of legal mechanisms to respond to it are always a major obstacle that impedes women from getting involved in political processes. In some countries, the fact that women were not active combatants might be a justification to marginalize them from peace making processes.

In this regard, and given that you are involved directly in the UN world, it would be interesting to know your thoughts about the real and tangible impact the UNSC Resolution 1325 has had on the role of women in peace processes.

Emb. Yanerit Morgan

Dear Mabel:

Your question is very timely. Next Friday the Security Council will have an open debate about Women Peace and Security, and after ten years of the adoption of the S/res/1325 progress has been uneven. In the concept note circulated by Nigeria, as President of the Security Council, it is reflected that there are still many gaps and challenges still remain towards the goal of guaranteeing women's participation in decision making in all stages of peace processes as well in conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy. There is a very clear absence of women from formal peace negotiations with all the consequences that we can imagine. To improve these situation there is a recommendation to make concerted efforts at the international, regional and national actors, in particular those providing technical and financial support to peace processes, including targeted special policies like increasing the quality gender expertise for peace making, a job that being done by UN

Women with the leadership of Michelle Bachelet, who is very engaged with this effort.

Comment sent by Ximena Gómez Chávez, from the Mexican Consulate in Santa Ana, US

Basically I think it is time to get rid of stereotypical views of women, especially when we are talking about peace processes. Lots of international relations theorists conceive women as pacifist entities just because they are physically designed to give birth, a misconception that has been refuted by some other scholars who have witnessed historical events in which feminists' advocacy for military intervention prove to be as significant as men's. By accepting the latter we will be able to perform in a more egalitarian environment since both men and women act not according to their sex but to their civilian expectations and unique beliefs.

Moving on to the second question, we all know that peace processes involve endless and difficult negotiations among States or communities; unfortunately it is more complicated to achieve positive results when the conditions set at the table marginalize women assuming that they lack experience in the field, since warfare is understood as a strictly manly activity. Despite this misinterpretation of a 21st century reality, women continue to be set aside, sometimes considering that their "too feminine" approach of things or their inherent "maternal instincts" might deviate from what a still very conservative international community identifies relevant to the discussion. In that sense, women have not entirely been able to infiltrate the "adult's table" as one of the readings suggest.

In regards to which approach is the correct one to deal with women's participation, I will begin by saying that it should not only limit itself to prevent armed conflicts by playing an active role, for example in peacekeeping operations, or even to propose short or long term solutions after a conflict had taken place. By doing so we are automatically excluding

ourselves from the diplomacy process and compromising the role of women as key decision-makers. By this means it is necessary to step up and secure our presence during conflict by interacting with the ones that plan and carry out war, we need as part of this strategy to overcome gender related assessments, to break the barriers that alienate us from a male-dominated sphere and to even speak (in our own way) the language often used by our male counterparts.

Comment sent by Jacqueline Morán, from the Embassy of Mexico in Ecuador

As Ambassador Morgan said, there are a lot of competent and talented women. According to the UN Secretary-General's annual report to the Security Council on women and peace and security, there is a growing recognition of women's roles in peace and security. The problem is to change attitudes and misconceptions about the capacity of women. I consider that the female participation in all the social, cultural, and economic issues, as well as in negotiations processes must be in accordance to our status as humans, not as a fact of power. Because we are not talking about physical power, ideas of weaknesses related to women should be unacceptable, even for the same women. We should consider that the participation of women in all conflict situations could provide a different point of view regarding those problems. Women are, in general, the ones who suffer the consequences of the armed conflicts, but at the same time, there are the ones who are incessantly working on looking for better conditions for their families, and consequently, for the well being of their societies. I also consider that the participation of women should be on the basis of the recognition of their capabilities, not just to fulfill quotes based on gender politics.

Comment sent by Margarita Flores, from the Embassy of Mexico in South Africa

Estimada Yanerit,

Tu primera pregunta me recuerda el comentario de un funcionario de Naciones Unidas que conocí en Angola, y que señalaba que aún deberá pasar mucho tiempo para que las mujeres seamos consideradas para participar, de manera más activa y numerosa, en los procesos de paz. Su argumento se basaba en el hecho de precisamente dichos procesos, son resultado o se dan en situaciones de riesgo, en los cuales la presencia de las mujeres, aún sea como funcionarias, es riesgosa. La visión de la mujer como un “ente frágil”, es sin duda uno de los mayores obstáculos a vencer.

Lo anterior, por consecuencia, limita el papel de la mujer como mediadora o líder. Se deja de lado entonces que somos conciliadoras por naturaleza, pacientes y con una enorme capacidad para escuchar. Creo que la aportación de la mujer en los procesos de paz debe ser tanto por lo que podemos aportar, como por el hecho de que debemos ejercer nuestro derecho a participar en igualdad de condiciones.

Dear Yanerit,

Your first question reminds me of a comment made by a United Nations officer whom I met in Angola, who indicated that it would be long before more women are considered to participate, and more actively, in peace processes. His argument was based on the fact that precisely those processes are the result of (or take place in) risky situations, where women, even as public officers, are at risk. The thought of women as "fragile beings" is, undoubtedly, one of the greatest obstacles to overcome.

As a consequence, this limits the role of women as mediators or leaders. The fact that we are conciliators by nature, patient, and with a great ability to listen is left aside. I think that women's contribution to peace processes must take place both because of what we can contribute with, and because we must exert our right to participate in equal conditions.

Comment sent by Ana Luisa Fajer, from the Mexican Consulate in Saint Paul

La pregunta que hace Yanerit Morgan respecto de los obstáculos para lograr el objetivo de promover la participación de la mujer en los procesos de paz me parece pertinente, aunque considero que no puede generalizarse la respuesta respecto de dónde debe concentrar sus esfuerzos la comunidad internacional. Habría que considerar las diferentes culturas y la posición de la mujer en ellas. Por ejemplo, llama la atención que en el Congreso de Ruanda, el 50% de las parlamentarias sean mujeres. En ese caso, y considerando el tema de las cuotas que introdujo Marcela Celorio, éstas no son relevantes. La mujer en África ha jugado un papel central en la vida política y social desde siempre. Ello se refleja en el número de mujeres parlamentarias en algunos países africanos, o en el reciente premio Nobel, otorgado a la Presidenta de Liberia, por ejemplo. Para el mundo occidental, se considera un avance que el 18% o el 22% de las mujeres participen en el Congreso estadounidense o mexicano, cuando en muchos de los países africanos los porcentajes de mujeres que participan en las iniciativas legislativas rebasan los estándares occidentales y, por el contrario, en Irán o Iraq, apenas son unas cuantas mujeres las que participan en el Congreso. En Kuwait, apenas hace unos años consiguieron las mujeres el derecho a votar y la lucha más importante para las mujeres sauditas, a quienes se les otorgará el derecho al voto a partir de 2015, es lograr que les permitan manejar. Hay, por lo tanto, distintas variables en juego y prioridades según los contextos políticos, socio-culturales y religiosos.

Yanerit Morgan's question regarding the obstacles related to the promotion of women's participation in peace processes seems pertinent to me. However, it is my opinion that we cannot generalize an answer regarding where the international community must concentrate its efforts. Different cultures, and women's place in them, must be taken into account. For example, it attracts my attention to learn that 50% of the Members of the Rwandan Parliament are women. In this case, and considering the topic of quotas introduced by Marcela Celorio, they end up being irrelevant. Women in Africa have always played a central role in social and political life. This is reflected in the number of women MPs in certain African countries, or the recent Nobel Prize, given to the President of Liberia, for example. For the Western world, the fact that 18 to 22% of the MPs are women is considered a step forward while, in many African countries, the percentage of women

participating in legal bills exceeds Western standards and, on the contrary, in Iran or Iraq, there are hardly any women in the Congress. In Kuwait, women have had the right to vote for just a few years, and the most important battle for Saudi women, who will be allowed to vote since 2015, is to be permitted to drive. Therefore, there are many variables and priorities involved, depending on political, socio cultural, and religious contexts.

Comment sent by María Noemí Hernández, from the Embassy of Mexico in France

Querida Yanerit:

Entre los obstáculos para la participación de la mujer en los procesos de paz o en cualquier otro proceso, se encuentra que en la mayoría de las sociedades aun estamos discutiendo sobre la necesidad de una mayor participación de la mujer en la toma de decisiones de la sociedad. En tanto no superemos esta etapa, los signos de obstáculos seguirán siendo evidentes.

En conflictos armados, desafortunadamente las mujeres y los menores son víctimas de la fuerza por las dificultades de movimiento que representa una familia y la escasa o nula disposición de una mujer para abandonar a sus hijos en estado de indefensión. Sin embargo, como lo dijo una de nuestras compañeras, una vez que la paz regresa, han sido las mujeres las responsables de reconstruir sus casas, sus países y el bienestar de sus sociedades.

Un ejemplo histórico es la reacción de las mujeres alemanas al término de la segunda guerra mundial, cuando ellas comenzaron a trabajar en la construcción de sus escuelas, conducir tranvías, grúas y todo tipo de transportes de carga para reconstruir sus iglesias y sus viviendas. Este caso no se refirió al derecho a participar en igualdad de condiciones, sino a

la urgencia humana de contar con habitaciones decorosas y de construir o reconstruir la vida social que les fue arrebatada por la guerra. Estas necesidades básicas existen en todo el mundo y su satisfacción no debería perder energías o tiempo dedicados al debate de la igualdad de derechos o la división de roles según el género.

Es difícil afirmar que hay un “enfoque correcto” para todas las mujeres. Más bien considero que las mujeres debemos participar activamente, según las necesidades que se nos presentan, sin esperar a que la comunidad internacional resuelva que nos corresponde a nosotras resolver nuestros propios problemas y alcanzar nuestras propias metas. Ejemplos e inspiración pueden encontrarse en múltiples casos como los de Juana de Asbaje, Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez, Rosa Parks, Indira Gandhi, Marie Curie, Hellen Keller, o en grupos como las Adelitas de la Revolución mexicana, las mujeres de India, Bangladesh y otros países en África que con ayuda de microcréditos han desarrollado sus economías familiares y regionales.

En resumen, si nosotras nos vemos a nosotras mismas como víctimas, lo seremos a los ojos de los demás. Si nosotras nos dedicamos a encontrar el camino para resolver nuestros dilemas cotidianos, es posible que encontremos el apoyo de nuestra sociedad, aun en presencia de obstáculos históricos.

Gracias Yanerit por conducirnos a este tipo de reflexión.

Emb. Yanerit Morgan

Dear friends:

Thank you very much for your replies to my questions. I agreed with all your valuable comments, which show that the issue is very complex and has a lot of facets.

As María Luisa has said, is difficult to be general even by region. The comments about the participation of women in Africa are very interesting because in general it is not expected taking into consideration the situations that women faced in those countries. Here at the UN the participation of women Ambassadors Permanent Representatives is as follows: Western Countries: 8, Asia 7, Latin America and the Caribbean region 5, Africa only three, including a strong woman of Nigeria that participates very actively in the Security Council.

I also agreed with Margarita Flores and Jacqueline Morán in that the idea that women are fragile is unacceptable. In this regard we have opposed in the UN a lot of times to the inclusion of women as vulnerable group in the same category of children, elderly, indigenous etc., but it's still a tendency in particular supported by men diplomats.

Noemí Hernandez has pointed out that women not only have a special role in the prevention of conflicts, or in peace negotiations, but also in the post conflict situations. The role of women in post conflict situations is very important and an example of that is the relevance of the participation of women in the Arab Spring processes. In the other hand, in relation with the responsibility of women for the achievement of gender equality, I consider that the compromise is bigger for women like us that are involved in decision making. The other issue that is important to raise is that gender equality issues are not only for women, men have to be involved.

Comment sent by Marcela Celorio, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Mexico in Israel

Dear Yanerit, nice to have the opportunity to get in touch with you again.

Taking in to consideration your lasts comments regarding the inclusion of women as vulnerable group in the same category of children et al, and also the comments made by Ana Luisa on the difficulty to have a general approach, don't you think we should consider women as a vulnerable group depending on their situation? I am sure that women face different challenges, environments with different backgrounds, so I tend to think that there are still a lot fragile women around the world.

Emb. Yanerit Morgan

Dear Marcela,

Thank you very much for your comment.

I agree with you. There are many women with additional conditions of vulnerability that are even worse for them than for men due to gender discrimination. In the Beijing Platform of Action, adopted by the UN Conference on Women on 1995, we acknowledged, for example, the special situations of women in armed conflict, indigenous women or women in poverty. In that regard, the consideration of the vulnerability of women in general, as a group, in the same footing of children, the elderly, indigenous peoples, is not the correct approach.

I also agreed that the level of vulnerability of women can be different taking into consideration cultural backgrounds, and environments, but some challenges are very general, for example: women participation in the political field or domestic violence against women. I agree that we must focus in the most vulnerable ones, including special vulnerable women, but at the end the main point for me is that we are not even close to achieve gender equality. I remember the debates we had around one of the main statements in the Beijing Declaration, that can sound absurd, but for the women groups were very important: "Women's rights are human rights". For me is no less, no more, for most of the half of the world population.

Comment sent by Beatriz Nava, from the Embassy of Mexico in Singapore

Ambassador Morgan,

Thank you for allowing us to focus our attention in a topic, I must be honest, have never thought about. Or not in the particular field of peace processes (affirmative actions and quotas are part of the mainstream in the discussion on gender equality). I tried to expand the research on the topic and found this most interesting paper of UNIFEM dated April 2009:

http://www.realizingrights.org/pdf/UNIFEM_handout_Women_in_peace_processes_Brief_April_20_2009.pdf

The main premise of the paper is to separate the focus on the actual number of women participating formally in the negotiation process in order to focus on the influence of women in the actual peace accords, the latter achieved through informal channels (the so-called Track II mechanisms). With this differentiation, the author confirms that, after sampling 21 major peace processes since 1992, only 2.4% of signatories of peace agreements were women, no women have been appointed Chief of Delegation and women participation accounted for 5.9% of the negotiating delegations. It draw my attention nevertheless the women participation in the Chapultepec Agreement (El Salvador 1992), where 12% of the signatories were women as well as 13% of women in negotiating terms. Women also had a strong presence (never above 20%) in either mediator role (Democratic Republic of Congo, 2008) and playing a witness role (17% and 20% respectively in Liberia, 2003 and Uganda 2008 (Juba Peace Agreement), i.e. in African peace processes – which complements the information already provided by Ana Luisa Fajer and commented by Ambassador Morgan on the remarkable female political participation of women in that continent.

On the other side, however, the author emphasizes the role of UNIFEM and the UN Department of Political Affairs in Uganda (2008) by providing a Gender Adviser to the SG's special envoy to LRA-affected areas. The result: a more inclusive national ownership, and the inclusion of gender-responsive reconstruction policies and implementation policies, accountability and justices for gender-based crimes, among others. A similar evaluation is provided to Darfur (2006) where UNIFEM supported the involvement of a Gender Expert and Support Team (GEST) with similar results to Uganda in the contents of the agreement.

Obviously the paper advocates the role of UNIFEM in this gender teams/advisory to the negotiation tables, but it seems to be clear that these initiatives have had an impact on the actual result of the agreements to include gender-related provisions on human rights guarantees, physical security, legal security, economic security and political participation.

Certainly, there is much work to do and road to walk in order to increase the number of women in the negotiation table, but the angle of results and the influence on peace accords in order to include gender-sensitive contents through indirect means, is also worth paying attention to. Enforcement is another story, but it seems that track II/informal mechanisms are presenting good results and probably the support to such initiatives could lead eventually to a firmer inclusion of women in formal peace negotiation processes.

Comment sent by Tania Ri3n Pe1a from the Undersecretary for North America's Office

I agree with Jacqueline Mor3n when she says that women participating in peace processes should not be there just because of gender quotes. And I also agree that women and children are the weakest victims in armed conflicts, but it is also true that women have enormous strength to face difficulties.

I think the good combination refers to the fact that we are very sensitive and emotional, but we are also capable of overcoming very complicated situations. And we are capable of making decisions that are not just emotionally motivated. I think women tend to be more hard working than men because we have to prove that we are in a certain position because of our capabilities, not just because we are good looking or young. We are more professional and that makes us more reliable when it comes to taking charge of delicate matters as negotiations for peace processes.

Comment from Micaela Liberato, from Embassy of Mexico in New Zealand

Dear all,

It was a great pleasure to be part of this forum and to read about the interesting subjects of great importance for the professional and personal development of the women in the diplomatic career.

This forum is a great tool for the young generations of young diplomatic women, as it will be make them conscious about the burden they can encounter on their path and the form of made front to them and counter rest the negative effects, resulting in the enforcement of their self confidence and optimum professional development.

Thanks ladies, panelist, and IMR.

MIÉRCOLES 26 DE OCTUBRE

MODERADORA: MIN. MABEL GÓMEZ OLIVER
JEFA DE CANCELLERÍA EN LA EMBAJADA DE MÉXICO EN ESTADOS
UNIDOS

TEMA: EL PAPEL DE LA MUJER EN EL PROCESO DE TOMA DE
DECISIONES DE LA POLÍTICA EXTERIOR
THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS IN FOREIGN
POLICY

Min. Mabel Gómez Oliver



Good morning and good afternoon to all panelists and to all participants in the audience. I would like to commend the Matias Romero Institute for organizing this forum on women in diplomacy, such a relevant and pertinent topic which brings to the table numerous aspects of the challenges and obstacles that women still have to confront in their daily personal and professional life, not only in diplomacy but in all areas of society. Today, I would like to open the discussion related to the role of women in the decision making process in foreign policy. There has been important progress in terms of participation of women at the highest levels where decisions on foreign policy are taken. And although the need for a greater gender balance in the foreign policy decision making areas is still currently very relevant, the topic I want to address today is more about how women influence the content, orientation and approach of decisions related to foreign policy.

To start this debate, let me remind you that some scholars on gender and international relations have argued that women are inherently pacifist, and therefore they are more reluctant than men to promote sanctions or the threat of the use of force, the use of force, or armed violence as a mean to solve problems. This would imply that the more women participate in

foreign policy the more likely international peace would be reached and maintained.

- 1) Do you agree with this statement?
- 2) Do you think that pacifism is determined by gender?
- 3) If that is not the case, do you see any difference between the way women and men influence and make foreign policy?
- 4) Do you think that the increasing participation of women in the decision making process in foreign policy has a direct impact in the orientation of decisions and, in general, in the way States behave internationally?

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Min. Mabel Gómez Oliver

Since the audience has no reactions to these questions, let me share with you my thoughts in this regard. There are several examples in contemporary history where we have witnessed women taking decisions that have implied the use of force or the implementation of aggressive policies. Hence from my standpoint, gender is not by itself a factor determining a more pacifist approach or view. Some scholars have even indicated that identifying women as inherently pacifists might provide an additional argument to those male hawkish decision makers who prefer a sole male environment in taking decisions. However, there are some studies indicating that individuals who are more sensible to gender equality tend to prefer non-violent solutions to conflict, as the results of surveys conducted by political scientists Marc Tessler and Ina Warnier throughout the Middle East indicate. It would be interesting and relevant to do further research in this regard.

Moreover, interesting studies as the one conducted by the management consultancy Caliper –cited in the op-ed by Andrew Miller that I provided as

suggested reading- have found that women have certain distinct traits relative to their male counterparts that may have an influence in the way women take decisions in politics and in particular in foreign policy. Caliper identifies four distinct leadership traits that would be decisive in this regard: 1) Inclusiveness; 2) persuasiveness; 3) perseverance; and 4) risk-taking.

It would be very interesting to hear from male decision makers what they think about this association between women and these traits relative to their own traits, thinking and behavior in foreign policy.

Questions sent by Guadalupe García, from the Delegation of the Foreign Ministry at Estado de México

En la actualidad, ¿qué porcentaje de mujeres influyen en la toma de decisiones del país?

Currently, what percentage of those who influence in decision making in Mexico are women?

Min. Mabel Gómez Oliver

Guadalupe, thank you very much for your specific question that allows me to provide some facts regarding women participation in decision making in Mexico, in general, not only in foreign policy. The latest data that I have found in this regard is the result of an analysis made by the Mexican Institute for Women, INMUJERES, published in 2006 that seems to be still valid. According to this analysis based on information compiled from the Judicial and Executive Branch of the federal government, including decentralized institutions, out of 92.261 men posted in superior and medium levels of responsibility, there were 25.320 women, representing 27.4% of the total. This percentage is very much lower than the 40.4% of women that are part of the total economically active population in Mexico.

Comment sent by Graciela Gómez, from the Direction General for North America

To complement the information provided by Ambassador Gómez, I strongly recommend you our participants to have a look at the recommendations issued by the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against women of CEDAW to Mexico in 2006, as well as the 7th and 8th Consolidated Reports by our country presented in September 2010.

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw36/cc/Mexico%20cc%20advance%20unedited%20version.pdf>

http://cedoc.inmujeres.gob.mx/documentos_download/101179.pdf

The CEDAW issued a specific recommendation (No. 29) on facilitating the access of women to leadership positions, particularly in the foreign service. In order to increase female representation in Public Administration, the Committee suggests the application of temporary special measures (as described in article 4 of CEDAW). This has proved to be a highly controversial issue, since many women around the world oppose to the application of such measures as they consider these might undermine their position by claiming that they were achieved by means of sex quotas rather than by personal merit.

Swiss President and Foreign Minister, Mme Micheline Calmy-Rey has defended quotas as legitimate temporary measures to encourage parity, at least at the moment of entering the Foreign Service. In Mexico efforts have been made to create anonymous mechanisms, based on equal opportunities for entry and also for promotions in the Foreign Service, but for some groups this might not be enough.

I would appreciate your thoughts in this issue.

According to the 7th and 8th consolidated reports, from 2005 to 2010, 40% of new entries to the Foreign Service have been women. We also represent 40% of Mexican diplomats posted abroad, although most of them occupy low and middle rank positions (page 25). Only 21 embassies out of a total of 145, are headed by a woman.

We rank slightly better in terms of representation in international organizations: there are 396 Mexican officers working for these and 229 are women. However, 220 of them are posted in the area of “professionals, languages and general services”, and only 9 as high-ranking officials.

In terms of political representation, in 2010, 21.8% of the Cabinet Ministries were headed by a woman (including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs); in the Congress 21.4% of Senators and 27.2% of Deputies were women. It is worth noticing, however, that many political parties postulate female candidates for elective-positions only to have them resigning later in favour of male replacements. 32 such movements took place between August 2006 and August 2009 (page 69)

In local politics, women are badly underrepresented: only 6.3% of Governors and 5.5% of Majors (*presidentes municipales*) are women.

Herewith the text:

28. While recognizing the efforts made to increase the representation of women in public administration, the Committee notes with concern the small number of women in decision-making positions, in particular at the municipal level and in the Foreign Service.

29. The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen measures to increase the number of women in decision-making positions at all levels and in all areas, in the light of its general recommendation 23, on women in

political and public life. It also recommends that the State party introduce temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and general recommendation 25, to accelerate efforts to promote women to positions of leadership, including in the Foreign Service.

Min. Mabel Gómez Oliver

Dear Graciela, thank you very much for sharing with us the recommendations that CEDAW made to Mexico in its 2006 report, which are a clear indication of some of the challenges our country faces in terms of representation of women in public administration and in particular in the foreign service.

My thoughts on temporary measures to encourage parity: I believe that temporary measures such as quotas are a positive tool to ensure equal participation of men and women. However, I am convinced that these measures should be implemented together with a comprehensive public policy that provides for equal opportunities and equal conditions for professional development for men and women, and that takes into consideration cultural factors in a balanced manner. Allowing for the same number of women and men when registering for the foreign service does not by itself will ensure that this same parity will be maintained all along the way up to the Ambassadorial levels. To develop professionally, women need to be exposed to the same opportunities than men, and in that regard, they need to have optimal conditions regarding family, personal and professional concerns (access to training, participation in meetings, official travel, parental leave, nursery care, etc) in order to be able to enjoy those opportunities. Moreover, parity should be encouraged but never for the sake of reaching parity. In other words, women should be promoted based on skills not on the need of fulfilling a quota. Otherwise, erroneous perceptions about women capabilities would be reinforced and even perpetuated.

Emb. Yanerit Morgan

Dear Mabel:

You have pose a very difficult question at least for me because I think the idea that women have any kind of different qualifications has to deal with

the social environments in which women have develop more skills that others. For me it's natural to see women more inclined towards negotiations even in the family that for the use of force than men, this is because in our societies the monopoly of the use of force is related with men. At the same time we know women in power are very tough, like the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and so many others. This reflects that we have the same capabilities than men. In any case it is good news that women in general are not used to violence because it means that with more women in power we will have perhaps more pacific societies.

Min. Mabel Gómez Oliver

Yanerit, your comments lead me to bring to the discussion an idea that I am sure that you all have heard or even confronted in your professional life. I refer to this idea that tends to divide or classify areas of expertise by gender, that in practical terms would be an attempt to reserve exclusively to men, certain areas of study such as defense and security related issues, as if women were not skilled or capable enough to understand and address these matters. You are right, Yanerit, women have as many capabilities as men to understand, perform and become outstanding professionals in any field as men.

Regarding your comment on social environments in which women have developed more skills than others, let me indicate that in fact, not only that factor but others such as personal and professional background, as well as specific experiences in life, have an impact in the way individuals approach the issues.

Moreover, women and men who are gender perspective oriented add a great value to decision making processes since they look at all issues with a gender perspective so every program, initiative or solution to a problem reflects it.

Min. Mabel Gómez Oliver

Now let me go back to the distinct leadership traits that Caliper has identified as distinctive women qualities that could significantly influence global politics as more women begin to make decisions at the international level. In particular, I am especially interested in the inclusiveness, because over the years, having worked with both men and women, I have found that women interact with their co-workers more on a team building and team work basis than on individualistic approaches. I have also seen women's preference to be inclusive all the way in the process that goes from organizing work up to taking and implementing a decision, which could be a meaningful trait when we translate it into interaction among states in the international arena: women could be more inclined to favor multilateral action, which is more inclusive, than unilateral action, to address global challenges. In any case, this is also a matter of further study in which the increasing participation of women in decision making processes and their interaction in the international arena would provide us with additional elements for analysis.

Comment sent by Ximena Gómez Chávez, from the Mexican Consulate in Santa Ana, US

In my previous comments I did talk a little bit about the classic gender myth that women are pacifists' entities, a statement sustained by a vast majority of foreign policy theorists who argue that and I quote –women's maternal impulses translate into a greater reluctance to solve problems through armed violence– this assumption of course has proved to be partially incorrect, and I agree with it, because it is not the physical constitution of a person what make him or her to act in a certain way, some other elements intervene in the decision-making processes that have to do for example with ethics and moral values.

Regarding the second question I must say that I believe in gender equality, therefore from my point of view pacifism should not be seen as a condition of a single nature depending on how substantial the influence of men or women in any given country is. Pacifism has to do more with the specific circumstances of a certain State: levels of education, access to health care, respect to human rights, unemployment rates, social development,

accountability of the government in turn, just to mention a few. So in that order of ideas at the end it doesn't matter whether a political actor is male or female; what matters is their ability to respond to the demands of its constituency.

Since I contend that pacifism is not determined by gender, foreign policy appears to be one of the arenas that can prove me wrong, since the origin and development of international relations theory is by all main aspects an outline proclaimed by men. But things have changed; we are moving forward thanks to the increasing participation of women in politics, a safe box kept it close for several years. Given the opportunity to infiltrate at some point the "adult's table" issues sometimes referred as "soft" were introduced by women a victory that did influence the way foreign policy is designed.

Comment sent by María Noemí Hernández, from the Embassy of Mexico in France

- 1) Do you agree with this statement?
- 2) Do you think that pacifism is determined by gender?

Generally, it is possible that women nature is inclined for peace and order. Unfortunately, not in all places or at all times. Remember Aixa talking to his son Abu Abdallah Muhammad b. Ali, Muhammad XII, a.k.a. Boabdil after he surrendered in Granada (January 2, 1492).

- 3) If that is not the case, do you see any difference between the way women and men influence and make foreign policy?

In general, women look first for communication, mediation, and have less aggressive reactions.

4) Do you think that the increasing participation of women in the decision making process in foreign policy has a direct impact in the orientation of decisions and, in general, in the way States behave internationally?

Absolutely. Nowadays public policies consider also women and minors priorities. It was not the case 100 years ago.

Emb. Anne Lammila

Hello Mabel and others,

Thank you Mabel for the very interesting questions. I'll make a few comments on them below.

To start this debate, let me remind you that some scholars on gender and international relations have argued that women are inherently pacifist, and therefore they are more reluctant than men to promote sanctions or the threat of the use of force, the use of force, or armed violence as a mean to solve problems. This would imply that the more women participate in foreign policy the more likely international peace would be reached and maintained.

1) Do you agree with this statement? First of all, I'd like to say that it is a bit early to judge. There have been quite few female foreign policy makers this far. In general, I do believe that women are more inclined to search for diplomatic solutions instead of taking up arms. Women are too conscious about the consequences of an armed violence for countries, families and individuals, the economy. That is why they try to avoid wars as much as possible.

I don't agree that women are inherently pacifist but I agree that the more women we get as foreign policy leaders, the more negotiations and mediation would take place instead of sending troops. Women are too pragmatic to believe that complex problems could be solved by military means.

2) Do you think that pacifism is determined by gender?

I don't think pacifism is determined by gender. Rather, it is a question of education and what you learn from your parents/mom.

3) If that is not the case, do you see any difference between the way women and men influence and make foreign policy?

I do see a lot of differences in the way women influence and make foreign policy, compared to men. And this is true to all politics, as the example of Finland proves. In Finland, women got full political rights in 1906 and they started to work in the Finnish parliament in 1907. They took up questions in the political agenda that were important to them like right to education, child care, health care, care for elderly people, free school meals. Women understood very genuinely the need to educate their children in order to guarantee them a better life. – In foreign policy it is the same. Women leaders such as Mary Robinson, my own president Tarja Halonen, the Liberian Nobel-laureate Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson and many others have taken up the questions of equality and promotion of women and children's rights in the international fora. There have been enormous steps forward in these areas. Sometimes the changes in attitudes take time, as is the case in the implementation of the Resolution 1325.

The impact of women can be clearly seen in development policy as well. Nowadays there are no development projects without a gender impact analysis. It comes as naturally as environmental impact assessments. There are more and more projects and programs to increase the participation of

women in political life. Women foreign policy leaders put emphasis on projects on education and health care, as well.

I have my own experience from the time I was working as the Deputy Permanent Delegate to UNESCO. As we were quite a few active women in the Executive Board, we decided to unite our forces in order to get changes in UNESCO which at that time was rather stuck into unhealthy administrative practices (even corruption). We worked together closely before the big meetings and formed common positions on each of the agenda items. Then we decided who would present the position, and then all others we would support the speaker. It was wonderful! Finland, Pakistan, St. Lucia, Columbia, France, Samoa, Barbados, Grenada, Lebanon, Canada ... and occasionally other countries as well were on the same board. Of course men were welcome as well, and that is how we got Argentina, Germany, New Zealand, Australia, Belgium and others on board. We got through so many improvements into UNESCO practices and resolutions. I think that "the Radical Ladies" as we were called really had an impact on how foreign policy was made in UNESCO.

4) Do you think that the increasing participation of women in the decision making process in foreign policy has a direct impact in the orientation of decisions and, in general, in the way States behave internationally?

Referring to what I have said above, yes!

Comment sent by Jacqueline Morán, from the Embassy of Mexico in Ecuador

Regarding to the questions posted by Ambassador Gomez Oliver, I consider that we are facing a shift of power from men to women. Obviously, this movement has not been concluded and changes are slow because they mean to transform the idiosyncrasy of men, but also of women. As women, we need to understand that we have capacity to deal and handle with situations associated to men, including the decision making process in foreign policy. This is a state of mind.

From the sociological perspective which assumes that sex and gender differences may be influenced by the social roles defined as appropriate for women and men, the masculine traits, plus believing oneself to be dominant, competitive and aggressive is correlated with a non-pacifist world view. However, we cannot make this kind of generalization. Some consider that women are unable to make aggressive decisions or risk decisions. The fact is that women are more sensitive to situations that could harm the society. However, all of these misconceptions are examples of stereotypes that often give a sense of fear and doubt to women in the process of making decisions. A key element is to create more equitable societies changing the social norms that influence the perceptions of weakness towards women.

Min. Mabel Gómez Oliver

I would like to thank all the participants for their interesting comments and questions. And as a concluding remark, I would like to state the following:

Regardless of the response that each of us may have to the question as to whether women are inherently pacifist, I do believe that women participating in the decision-making process make a real difference in terms of content of decisions and approach to implement them. Women bring to the table their own perspective based on their own experience. Women tend to think more in terms of responding to the common interest over the individualist interest. They bring diversity to the discussions. And at the same time, they are willing to take forceful action when human beings are at risk or when the nation interest is at stake.

Moreover, the relationships that women establish with other women beyond borders, and the solidarity spirit that prevails among women that have a role in foreign policy, are stronger than any particular conflict or tension, and may even have a major role in solving differences between countries.

In any case, to have women with gender perspective actively participating in the decision making process, ideally, ensures that every issue in the foreign policy agenda is addressed from a gender perspective. I refer to women with gender perspective because, unfortunately, there are still some women who do not have a gender perspective and far from being supportive to other women colleagues, they paradoxically behave with a macho attitude. Finally, addressing gender parity and adopting a gender perspective is not about tagging a separate topic of the foreign policy

agenda as "women issues", which in practice minimizes its importance and induces many men not to even care to take a look to the matter. It is about considering women a key component and a key motor of every strategy, program or project in which we want to be fully successful.

¡Gracias a todas por su participación!

Comment sent by Marcela Celorio, from the Embassy of Mexico in Israel

Dear Ambassador Gómez,

Regarding this issue, I would take in to consideration the comments made by Ambassador Morgan regarding the social environments in which women have to interact. For example, in Israel you can find, sometimes, even a more “hawkish” attitude and prone to the use of force in a woman than in a man and that is due to the social, cultural and political context in which women grew and have to face. I think that we are survivors and very intelligent and capable ones, so in order to survive I think that if you have to use force to guarantee, for example, the well being of your population, you won’t hesitate. At the end, I agree that the gender perspective will add a great value to the decision making processes.

Comment sent by Aída Margarita Flores, from the Embassy of Mexico in South Africa

¿De verdad es importante querer evitar o rechazar el que se asocie ser mujer como sinónimo de “pacifista”, “negociadora”, o “incluyente”? En mi opinión, estas cualidades no son cuestión de género. El hecho de que las mujeres tendamos a buscar soluciones diplomáticas a los conflictos en lugar de hacer uso de la fuerza, puede tener muchas explicaciones (alguien diría que los hombres desde pequeños, juegan a las “luchitas” a las “guerras”

pero no a “platicar” o dialogar como hacemos las mujeres)”, pero no necesariamente la cuestión del género.

Sí considero que el aumento de la participación de la mujer en los procesos de toma de decisiones en materia de política exterior tiene cada vez más un impacto directo en la orientación de las decisiones y en la manera en que los Estados se conducen internacionalmente. Prueba de ello son las recién galardonadas con el Premio Nobel de la Paz. Mujeres cuya actividad e influencia han sido determinantes en la vida política de sus países. El reconocimiento de eso es importante.

Is it really important to want to avoid or reject the association between being a woman and a "pacifist", a "negotiator" or "inclusive"? In my opinion, these characteristics are not a question of gender. The fact that women tend to look for diplomatic solutions to conflicts instead of the use of force can have many explanations (someone could say that men, since they are very young, "wrestle" for fun and play war games, and don't chitchat or dialogue like women do), but not necessarily one related to gender.

I do consider that increase in women's participation in decision making processes regarding foreign policy has a more and more direct impact on the orientation of decisions and the way States behave internationally. The women recently awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize are a proof of that. The activities and influence of these women have been determinant in their countries' political life. Acknowledging this is important.

Min. Mabel Gómez Oliver

Aída Margarita, I like your reflection in response to the question with which I opened this discussion. All those adjectives that you mention and many others have been used by scholars who study the role of women in politics and the role of women in international relations, trying to identify differentiated characteristics from men in the way they perform, approach an issue or take a decision. For some, all those adjectives are a way to tag

women and precisely prevent their access to areas of study in which different kind of qualities are required from a men perspective, and ultimately discriminating against them. In this regard, some men might consider that if women are inherently pacifist, it is better to keep them away from national security and defense areas where aggression or the use of force could be considered as options to respond to a specific situation or conflict.

In sum, adjectives shouldn't be the issue but the need to ensure access and empowerment of women so they can perform on equal conditions as men, regardless of their own way of thinking and way of approaching issues.

Comment sent by Susana Garduño, from the Embassy of Mexico in the United Kingdom

I think this is one of the most interesting matters for us: the reality behind all these years fighting for gender equality.

I have to say that I very much enjoyed the FA's article Flight of the Valkyries because it gave me a different light on the idea "that women are unable to make aggressive decisions or risk decisions", as commented by Jacqueline. I can just imagine that if so different women as Rice, Power and Clinton concurred in leading their armed forces into international conflict has to do more with a gender trait which I can only resume with the following phrase: "women are more resolute than men in solving long-standing issues". I normally don't like to stereotype, but in my professional experience my women superiors have showed more character, decision and spent more time in solving complex problems, either of internal administrative nature and of course of foreign policy. I think this has to do as well with the concept of "security mom" portrayed in this same analysis. Women are fierce of protecting their families and those who they feel their own, therefore I think they are more inclined to harsh decisions in order to ensure the conditions for safety.

On the other hand, I found very interesting Guadalupe's question on the percentage of women participating in decision making in Mexico. I have to say that I took a course of Gender and Public Affairs at FLACSO in 2004.

One seminar shocked me greatly which was Budget and Gender Equality and basically with facts and numbers the economist who taught it explained us how, even though we have a number of laws and budgetary provisions in Mexico, the actual expenditure in gender programs was not even near 1%, mainly because of the little money assigned and in other cases because after being publicly approved it was later re-oriented to other agendas. Sadly, I don't think this has greatly changed, but as Clinton pointed out in her Times' article, women are already participating actively and modestly in various areas previously reserved to men.

I think a general problem in our country is not to learn our history, because I think it provides us with the voice of experience and allows us to make better decisions for the future. Therefore I would like to share this link of the Legal Investigations Insitute which makes an interesting recount of women in our public service and has a chapter dedicated to the Foreign Service: <http://www.bibliojuridica.org/estrev/derint/cont/6/cmt/cmt21.htm>

Finally, on the quotas issue I think they have been a needed mechanism to initiate women involvement in public policy and its administration, however it is a practice that somehow we shouldn't encourage over skills and experience.

Min. Mabel Gómez Oliver

Susana, first of all, thank you very much for congratulating me for my recent promotion. I really appreciate your kind words on line under Maria's forum discussion.

You point out a very important issue, relevant to the implementation of gender programs. Even if progress has been made in Mexico in terms of gender equity, we are still lagging behind. More and significant resources should be allocated for the implementation of gender programs and for funding an overall gender public policy. There is much more to do in terms of having empowerment of women as a national priority and as a key component of our economic and social development strategy. We witness at the international level that at the center of the debate on gender equity is the realization and recognition by governments, private sector, international organizations and institutions that countries will only grow if women are economically empowered to fully participate as a driving factor of the

economy. In Mexico, we should be able to also recognize this new paradigm and take the right policy decisions accordingly.

Comment sent by Claudia García, from the Embassy of Mexico in Poland

Regarding Ambassador's Mabel topic related to the role of women in the decision making process in foreign policy and in particular how women influence the content, orientation and approach of decisions related to foreign policy, in my short experience on multilateral negotiations I have seen that women are gaining more and more spaces at all levels, including high positions in areas or topics that were consider for men, like in the case of disarmament negotiations.

When I started dealing with disarmament issues in the Permanent Mission of Mexico in Geneva in 2005 almost all of my colleagues from other countries were men. Sometimes, in the Conference on Disarmament I was the only women and I often felt that men colleagues treated me differently and in some occasions I was not invited to informal gatherings that were "reserved" for men.

The Conference on Disarmament Room was dark and you could even feel a heavy and fighting-for-power atmosphere. The discussions were always about the same issues, without any different idea or approach. Fortunately, as time passed more and more women diplomats from different countries and of all levels were appointed by their governments to cover this issue. Immediately the atmosphere changed, different proposals were made, discussions were more fluent and the approach to several topics was more constructive.

Even though, I don't think that pacifism is determined by gender, I think that women in most of the cases are more open to discuss and negotiate in order to reach non-confrontation or non-aggressive solutions to problems. In humanitarian and disarmament negotiations I have seen that the approach of women is more sensitive (not weak), they value more life and care more about the person.

I have also seen that women are more active and energetic in promoting peace, like Ambassador Mabel Gómez and the leaders of "Women's International League for Peace and Freedom" and "Reaching Critical Will".

I would like to share with you a link to an article from “Reaching Critical Will” about Gender and Weapons, which is in my opinion very interesting.

<http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/social/genderdisarm/genderweapons.htm>
↓

Min. Mabel Gómez Oliver

Dear Claudia, thank you for sharing this interesting article and your interesting experience on how you saw the Conference on Disarmament being transformed by the arrival of more women to the room and to the discussions. Having being seated at the Conference on Disarmament from 2007 to 2009 myself, I can also testify on the somber environment that prevailed in that room and how lively it suddenly appeared when women sitting there, representing their countries, were wearing lively and bright colors! This environment contrasted enormously with what you see in the Human Rights Council, also seated in Geneva, where of course, women are not only at the front line but perform a leading role in so many human rights related issues.

And your experience leads me to bring to the discussion the discrimination and macho attitudes that women still have to deal with in the international security, disarmament and non proliferation areas, despite the evidence of many outstanding knowledgeable women experts that are as capable as their male counterparts when dealing with those issues. The US is currently a good example of prominent women handling the international security agenda: most of the US top level negotiators for disarmament and non proliferation are women.

A personal comment, as Deputy Representative in Geneva dealing with disarmament, non proliferation and conventional weapons, I faced several times macho attitudes and male techniques as the ones mentioned by Maria, from male delegates coming from certain countries. But the strength of conviction and commitment, and the force given by Mexico's leading role in

these issues, provided me with a good base to counteract and prevent these attitudes from obstructing my participation.

Gracias otra vez, querida Claudia.

Comment sent by Beatriz Nava, from the Embassy of Mexico in Singapore

Ambassador Gómez,

First of all, congratulations on your recent appointment. As a woman member of the most recent promotion of the Mexican Foreign Service it is very encouraging to see that more women are arriving to the Ambassadorial level. My promotion at the Foreign Service presented a very equal distribution among men and women. All of them extremely capable (modesty included), well prepared and qualified. All the women, as Ximena can certify as well, earned their place in that promotion of the Foreign Service by own right and no quotas were applied in strict sense. I do believe in personal merit and in hard work, however I do agree on that quotas are necessary in the social environment we live in, in order to achieve eventually fully fledged participation of women in all areas of policy making. More frequently, and more decisively.

Regarding the approach to foreign policy, Indeed I do believe that women are more prone to the collective action and solidarity (what an inspirational comment from Ambassador Lammila on the UNESCO experience!), and may favour inclusion, as you mentioned, of topics that have been traditionally challenging for women like education, health standards, gender violence, human rights. Female decision makers have gone through many battles during their careers, and it would be indeed desirable that they could impregnate their decisions while at a position of power with the consciousness of what has been achieved and men take for granted.

That being said and answering your initial questions: I think that pacifism is determined, not by gender but by ideology, principles, upbringing, circumstances. In other words, that it has more to do with the personal style of leadership. Many individualistic women in power positions cannot drive

change in foreign policy outcomes, but many supportive gender-sensitive women would. That is why it is so important to be discussing this topic here. Hopefully all the participants of this forum could bear and practice that solidarity and sensitivity to key gender issues, while continuing our preparation, our studies and encouraging and empowering more women to study and helping them have better, equal opportunities in the short and long term.

Min. Mabel Gómez Oliver

Thank you very much Beatriz, for congratulating me for my promotion. I am gladly encouraged by so many young and younger women diplomats that have sent me messages indicating that my promotion make them to continue believing in the Mexican Foreign Service. Through these messages I have perceived the strength and energy of all those intelligent and skillful women that are pushing forward and decidedly advancing their careers in the Foreign Service, against all odds.

I am sure that your experience in the Foreign Service has exposed you to the fact that outstanding women are also working in other sectors related to international relations: in international organizations, in international business, in NGOs, in think tanks, and working in their own area of expertise they are, at the same time, moving forward the gender perspective agenda. What does that mean in practice? To reach out other women, to work with women, to work for women in need, to work to address the specific concerns affecting women, which at the end, is working in favor of children, in favor of the community, in favor of economic development, in favor of the world, in favor of peace.

I also hope that from participating in this forum, all of you will be the motor of change and strong advocates to broaden even more the gender perspective among women and among men. I hope to see more Mexican men being sensible and adopting a gender perspective, and participating in this kind of fora!

JUEVES 27 DE OCTUBRE

MODERADORA: EMB. ANNE LAMMILA
EMBAJADORA DE FINLANDIA EN MÉXICO, BELICE, CUBA Y HAITÍ.

TEMA: CÓMO TRABAJAR Y DESARROLLAR UNA CARRERA MIENTRAS
SE ES MADRE

HOW TO WORK AND MAKE A CAREER WHILE BEING A MOTHER

Emb. Anne Lammila



Good morning and good afternoon everybody! I would first like to thank for the Institute Matias Romero for organizing this exciting forum. At some point it would be interesting to have representatives of all continents in this kind of discussion. I spoke to my Jamaican colleague about this forum and she was excited about it and would have loved to participate.

I chose the topic for very obvious reasons, being a mother of three children and having worked as a diplomat since 1983. Times have changed a lot since I joined the Foreign Service. In 1983 we still had quite a masculine atmosphere in the Ministry. The Political Director greeted us newcomers, 15 women and 3 men and said: "I am afraid that the majority of you will be pregnant and out of office in a few years". Well, that is exactly what happened. Nevertheless, all of us are still in business, many of us as ambassadors and the Ministry is functioning better than ever. To my mind mothers are very efficient workers. We certainly know how to prioritize, how to make decisions fast, how to work with people, how to do long hours without exhausting ourselves too much.

What I have found extremely important is to connect with other women colleagues and work together with them, to support female colleagues, to

trust in them and show that. Men do that, so why would we women not do that?

I have been able to work and make career while being a mother. The Finnish legislation has made it possible as we have a right to stay home with almost a full salary approximately a year after the birth of each child. By law the mother leave does not have an impact on one's career. Even more importantly, there are a lot of norms and legislation supportive to diplomat's families that have been approved.

Now I would like to hear about your experiences. How have you been able to combine your career and your family life? Has your Ministry been helpful? I think it would be really useful to hear about good practices and hints on how to combine work and family. This would be useful especially for those ones that follow this forum in the Instituto Matias Romero. As I said earlier, I have been lucky to have always good female colleagues with whom I have been able to share experiences and learn good practices. Sisterly solidarity rules!

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Min. Mabel Gómez Oliver

Good morning Anne! Finland is definitively at the front in recognizing women and providing them better opportunities for professional development. You have mentioned a key element in which we would need to work more in Mexico, and I refer to the norms and legislation needed to facilitate that both, women and men can perform in their professions on an equal basis, and at the same time, enjoy and practice as parents. Furthermore, once we get to that point where norms and laws are in place we will have to ensure their full implementation by turning them into public policies. So, in sum, we still have to go a long way to get where Finland is.

In my experience, the way in which I have been able to combine my career and my life as a mother, is by having the fortune to be married to a Mexican man who has accepted, despite all odds, to be by my side helping me to be attentive of my daughter, whenever is needed. And I am very lucky in that regard, and I always commend my husband for that, for sacrificing his career so I could work abroad as diplomat. The positions I have had in the Foreign Service have been very demanding, and they have impeded me in several occasions from being with my daughter in important moments for her, so the presence of my husband has been a way to cover my absence. Many bosses, even some women, tend not to understand the family demands, and if they are flexible enough to authorize leaving the office, some of them would eventually react by marginalizing women from important areas of work or meetings.

For me, the career has always been about how to master balancing work, family and couple. And it is certainly not easy, because under the current circumstances, where there is not a proactive policy sensible to family and women demands in place, being successful professionally means in several ways, sacrificing a lot in terms of family and couple. I always try to compensate in the weekends, where I energetically and emphatically keep fully for my family.

Emb. Anne Lammila

Dear Mabel,

I am glad that you found such a good husband because otherwise we would have risked not to have one competent Mexican diplomat, such as you are...! I hope that in Mexico the change will also come and I am certain that it will come. The more women are working in the Ministry, the more the needs of families will be displayed. I am sure that you will have the same phenomenon than Finland has had, that women applicants are just so good that the Foreign Ministry cannot afford of taking them in. In the long run, the Foreign Ministry has to compete with other ministries and the private sector to get the best forces to work in.

It is essential that we women support each other. I was horrified to hear that some of you female bosses have been rude to you. After all, it is possible to work home as well, after the baby has fallen asleep. All what is needed is flexibility from the part of superiors.

Emb. Yanerit Morgan

Dear Anne, it is a pleasure for me to share experiences with women diplomats and, in the case of countries like Ireland, we have a lot to learn. Regrettably, the Mexican society in general does not understand the importance of the role of professional mothers. I agreed with you that a lot of men and even women believe that the roles of women as professionals and as mothers are incompatible but as we can see with a lot of successful examples that it is not the case.

I have a very supportive husband that takes care of my two daughters, who are 21 and 13 years old. Regrettably, my experience has not been an easy one. During the first years I traveled a lot and worked overtime to respond to the demands of my job. In both cases I had to short my maternity leave and I traveled so much that sometimes I have the feeling that the cost of my career has been very high not only for me, but for my family. In the other hand, I have two empowered young ladies that are very proud of their mother Ambassador. I always try to keep the balance of my role as professional and as a mother.

In conclusion I feel that the point that you have raised is very important, we have to start helping other women to make this challenge easier for them with the promotion, inside of our Minister and abroad, of better policies that can strengthen the role of women as mothers and as very qualified diplomats.

Comment sent by Graciela Gómez, from the Direction General for North America

Dear Ambassador Lammila,

Thank you very much for your comment. It is really inspiring to see that women can be mothers and successful diplomats at the same time.

In my experience, the most difficult challenges I have faced had to do with being a mother and an active diplomat. Both of those jobs represent the dream of my life and I am determined to being equally successful at both. Sadly, both are full-time jobs that take over your life and request loads of love and commitment.

When I joined the Foreign Service, many of my female role models were either single, or divorced or married but with no kids. Many of them stated quite proudly that they had had the courage to make the right choices, which in those years meant to succeed but stay childless.

I am convinced that things are changing and that despite what we had been told for generations, women can have it all: being mothers, professionals and being good on both counts!!!

I have four kids and it was my choice to breast-feed them for at least one year. This of course made life pretty complicated (let alone, painful!) at times, particularly during business trips and long meetings. I persisted and it meant that I have to be extra-efficient. For instance, during the World Economic Forum, I had to spend any break I had, expressing milk in order to keep it flowing. It always makes for interesting conversations when you have to negotiate with hotel managers to have your valuable breast-milk frozen and properly stored.

On one occasion I was attending a meeting on terrorism, in which most experts were men. One of the sessions went for too long and I felt I was literally exploding. As soon as the break came, I went to the ladies to express milk. As I was washing my hands, the female head of an American specialized agency “recognized” my equipment and she offered not to allow for sessions to go overtime. She also shared how some years ago, she was competing for a promotion with a male colleague and their boss insisted on sending them for trips all-over the U.S. She was breast-feeding and aware that not travelling might undermine her possibilities. Therefore she orchestrated a system to express and send her milk via Federal Express so that her baby didn’t have to suffer because of her absences.

To be honest, I have never heard of a man who has to face an equivalent dilemma.

Looking forward to your feedback on this!

Emb. Anne Lammila

Dear Graciela,

I already gave my comments to you by email. Once again, I just admire your efforts. For me it has been so much easier to breast-feed my babies at home.

Comment sent by Ximena Gómez Chávez, from the Mexican Consulate in Santa Ana, US

Thank you, Anne, for sharing with us such interesting comments on your experience as a working mother. As you already said, being a diplomat in a male-dominated field is not an easy task, but fortunately things are changing in a good way, maybe not as fast as we would like to, since some damaging practices remain at the top levels, especially when we refer to Latin American countries, where *machista* culture prevails.

In my personal experience, being a young diplomat who recently joined the Foreign Service a lot of questions arose by the time I decided to follow this career path, most of them involving my sentimental life. This I found to be a common thought among my female colleagues whose ages vary from 29 to 34, some of them about to get married by that time and some others single, like my case. In that sense I clearly remember to be advised to prepare myself for divorce or otherwise to assume that a better idea will be to get engaged with a male colleague. I did find this kind of remarks annoying due to the fact that each person is entitled to choose from a wide range of options. Moreover, are female diplomats doomed to fail only because the provider role has to be played by men according to unwritten social conventions?

Finally in regards to how helpful has the Ministry been in order to improve our quality of life I agree with Mabel, we are not even close to Finland. I certainly recognize the Ministry's efforts to decrease the gender gap, as time goes by more women are holding positions previously reserved to men; nonetheless, there are some other issues that have to be tackled, let's say the lack of resources available for the "trailing spouse" once you move abroad. Does Finland's Foreign Ministry drive its attention to this matter? And if so could you provide us some examples?

Emb. Anne Lammila

Dear Ximena,

I do agree that it is most unfair and stupid to suggest somebody to get married with certain type of person or not to marry at all. A woman should be able to choose her spouse as she best can.

The Finnish Ministry has a whole system concentrated on family affairs. There is a so-called Ombudsman for families, a person whose responsibility is to look after the needs of families in the Foreign Ministry. In each mission or Embassy, there is a person whose job is (among her/his normal work) to help families in adapting to the new country. We have web pages for families where information is given about the rights of the families. There is also an association of spouses that actively works for better conditions for

the spouses and children of personnel that works in the Foreign Service. There are a lot of rights that have been achieved. One of the most important ones is the right of the spouse to get pension and special compensation for the years she/he has followed the spouse abroad. There are a lot of rights concerning children too. The latest improvement came into power this year. The Ministry pays for the day care and school meals for children that follow their parents abroad. This comes on top of everything else that has been achieved before like school tuition fees, additional moving compensation etc.

The Ministry is also negotiating with many countries of the world, including Mexico, about the right for spouses to work abroad. Maybe in the near future Mexican spouses can get work permits to be able to work in Finland, and vice versa.

I can try to find out if any of our legislation has been translated into English in case you would be interested to know more.

Question from Guadalupe García, from the Delegation of the Foreign Ministry at Estado de México

Reconociendo el gran esfuerzo que conlleva mantener el equilibrio entre el papel de mujer profesionalista y madre en el hogar, ¿En alguna ocasión, han recibido algún reclamo por parte de sus hijos, por no tener el tiempo suficiente para estar presente en los eventos más importantes de su vida? En caso afirmativo, ¿cómo lo afrontan?, ¿se sienten culpables, o lo toman como parte de la decisión que asumieron de dedicarse a cierta profesión?

Acknowledging the great effort that keeping the balance between being a professional and a mother entails, have you ever received a complaint from your children for not having been present in the most important moments of their life? If yes, how do you deal with it? Do you feel guilty or take it as part of the decision you made to have a certain profession?

Emb. Anne Lammila

I don't remember them blaming me for not being present in the most important moments of their life. As I said earlier, I have spent 4 years altogether with them at home. While working, I have been able to have good day care for them, and when they were small I always came home early, at five o'clock or so. When they were at their teens I had work trips three-four times per year and I was away two weeks at the time. They didn't like that a lot but, fortunately, my husband could be with them. I also brought presents to them from the countries that I had visited. I guess that consoled them a bit.

I have not felt guilty. I have thought that it is part of my job to travel or to take part in receptions at night. It is always kind of balancing between the work and the family. I try to go only to the receptions or dinners that are absolutely important. There are a lot of events that I have skipped and keep on skipping. As I said also before, I have tried to apply for posts that are not the most hectic ones. That has helped a lot. And of course, it is the favourable atmosphere towards diplomats having a normal family life that helps. It is thought quite widely that it is better for diplomats and other personnel to have family life because they are then more efficient and effective in their work. When a person has nothing but her work she/he easily gets burn out.

Comment sent by Maritza Alonso, from the Mexican Consulate in Santa Ana, US

Dear Ambassador Lammila:

Thank you for sharing your experience to be a mother and to have a diplomatic career, like the others participating mention, Finland is far above to the other countries. In Mexico, we only have three months of maternity leave and after that we have to combine the work as a diplomat and to be a mother. As mentioned by Ambassador Gómez, leaders of mission exist that do not understand that the family is also a priority and if we have an emergency with one of the children we must attend it. In my case, I am married with a member of the Mexican Foreign Service, and our situation is a little difficult, for we have been in not nearby appointments, so while my daughters were little I had to be a mother and a father, since my husband only could be at home on weekends. I was posted in Los Angeles, California and he was in Sacramento, California (six hours driving).

We have been living like a family for 6 years, since we are in two nearby appointments, which permit us to have a single residence.

To the question of Guadalupe Garcia, in some occasions the children complain when you are not in important events. In my case, I tried to be in those events that require my presence, for example appointments with the teachers or when they received some diplomas by their studies. I also want to recognize all my bosses; they have always been supportive with family matters.

Emb. Anne Lammila

I would just like to comment that in Finland too we have many diplomatic marriages. Nowadays, the Ministry tries to as flexible as possible. For example, we now have a couple living in Brussels where the wife heads the NATO Delegation and the husband works as Finnish ambassador to Belgium. Previously she was the head of the Ramallah mission and he was our ambassador to Israel. I think that in the case of Mexico combining the two careers should be even easier as you are a bigger country and have more missions abroad than Finland (5,3 million inhabitants).

Questions sent by Socorro Córdova, from the Mexican Consulate in Phoenix

En su experiencia ¿considera que actualmente hay una generación de diplomáticas con menos estereotipos y ataduras culturales en ese sentido, en donde integra a su esposo y familia a algunas de sus actividades de trabajo, pero que a la vez es capaz de mantenerlos ajenos a su labor diaria, y además, defiende el núcleo familiar ante las adversidades del trabajo?; para procurar obtener éxito profesional y balance familiar ¿la mujer diplomática se vuelve una negociadora?

According to your experience, do you consider that the last few generations of women diplomats have less stereotypes and cultural restraints, so that they can integrate their husbands and families to some of their work activities, but can, at the same time, keep them generally separate, while they are also capable of defending their family before job adversities?

In order to achieve professional success and a balance with their families, do women diplomats become negotiators?

Emb. Anne Lammila

Yes, I think that there is a new generation of female diplomats that think that it is perfectly possible to combine a diplomatic career and family life. Of course, many times you need to work more than a colleague who hasn't got a family. For example when I worked as the Deputy Delegate of Finland to UNESCO I had to do almost all my reports during the night while children were sleeping. I would leave the office early to be able to spend time with them, eat together and go to the park, etc.

I think you are right; a woman diplomat has to be a skillful negotiator.

Comment sent by Ana Luisa Fajer, from the Mexican Consulate in Saint Paul, US

Dear Ambassador Lammila,

I appreciate the topic you proposed for discussion, particularly coming from a woman diplomat from Finland, where conditions for women are way more favorable. Mabel and Yanerit are very fortunate indeed, and their situations represent one of the realities that exist in the Mexican Foreign Service. There are many others. In my case, my husband is a Chilean born, and a Mexican by choice. He has been an understanding partner in regards to my career, and a caring and loving father. Parenting has been a shared commitment so far. Nevertheless, when my two sons, now 19 and 16, were little, I decided to work part time. Since this was not feasible at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at least for me because of my position as Director for African Affairs, I decided to take a leave, which of course had a cost. I knew this was going to happen, but I set my priorities at that time, and today I can say that it was worth it.

I actually did not stop working, and I ended up going back to the Foreign Service, which I think it is still worth it.

The Mexican Foreign Service has a long way to go to provide the means for women to balance work and family.

Women diplomats internationally might face similar challenges/dilemmas when deciding whether to become a diplomat or marry and have a family, as if they were irreconcilable. Certainly, there are better conditions in some countries like Finland, as opposed to others, as Amb. Lammila has shared with us, so I would ask, what would be the requirements/conditions needed to provide the right means for women to reconcile their working life with the couple and children? Does it depend on the level of development of a country? Maturity of democracy? Liberal versus conservative public policies? Or it is a decision that the bosses/ministers are expected to make? Therefore, it would not be an institutional decision but an individual decision which could not last?

Emb. Anne Lammila

I thought a lot about your questions. I think that the main thing is to have women around everywhere and especially in the political life. In Finland, women got full political rights as early as in 1906. Since 1907 we have had women politicians in the parliament. They fought for causes important for women, to have good day care for children so that women could go to work, health care, care for the elderly people, right for every child to go to school – for free –, free school meals etc. Women can be active in work life, including diplomacy, only if they can be sure that their children and old parents are taken care of.

In Finland, this has not been a question of liberal versus conservative politicians in being in power. It is considered normal for women to work. Maybe it is because of the long tradition of women being part of the political life. And we cannot forget that Finland had two wars against Russia. When men were fighting in the front, it was women who did the work in the place of their husbands and at the same time took care of their families.

Is it maturity or the state of democracy? Certainly those things are needed but development can be quite rapid as in the case of Finland. We are a very young nation and got independent in 1917. As late as in the 1950's we were a poor country that got development aid from Argentina and Brazil...

Comment sent by Marcela Celorio, from the Embassy of Mexico in Israel

How to work and make a career while being a mother?

Regarding this question, I must say that for me has been, in overall, quite simple. Of course, I had and I will face a lot of hardships, but the formula for me is to assume that once I chose to be a diplomat I was choosing also a way of living. So, I am not attached to traditional stereotypes of family, marriage, motherhood, etcetera. Since the beginning, I embraced the idea of being happy with my career (even though sometimes it is very, very difficult) that set of mind has helped me to be the best mother, the best daughter, the best sister, the best partner, the best friend I possibly can. I am divorced and I am lucky to have a wonderful son that has been able to appreciate diplomatic life. I always recall the quote of Ortega y Gasset "El hombre es el hombre y sus circunstancias" (Man is man and his circumstances). No we should say also: "Woman is woman and her circumstances". So, myself and the ones close to me live accordingly.

Also, I am enclosing an article from The Atlantic Monthly that might be of interest.

Emb. Anne Lammila

I like your attitude. I think this is exactly how women should feel and live.

Comment sent by María Noemí Hernández, from the Embassy of Mexico in France

Amb. Lammila,

Your question about career and mothering calls for very simple answers, like the need to wake up early and go to sleep late, but the question implies for me also the very complex answer related to the guilt for the missing time to be present at home with our children. Given the nature of diplomatic work and the skills required for a woman to accomplish it, I keep telling myself that my children would be very unhappy if I would follow up their growth, nutrition, evolution, performance and behavior, if I would do this job with half the accuracy with which I need to perform my daily tasks in the office. Therefore, probably is not so bad that they have their own time and space while I am away from home.

From the employers' point of view, a sick child is a real disaster. The mother is in distress if she is at work at all. There is no way out. Sickness is bad luck and society has to learn to live with it, and understand the mother-child nature, and required nurturing. This is a lesson we all need to teach to men and women in and out of the diplomacy world.

One very important issue is the mother-children, and mother-employer communication. Even when we are far away from the office or from home, telecommunications allow us these days to keep in touch with the offices and with home. Skype is not a substitute for the personal touch, but it helps solve urgent matters which do not require our immediate physical presence.

For me, children and career are not opposites, they are very important parts of my life, and as much as I enjoy my duties, I share with my children the remarkable rewarding facts coming out of following a vocation. On the other hand, my children are a very important inspiration to learn new subjects, and keep up with the otherwise undiscoverable technological world of teenagers. Sometimes, we diplomats are part of decisions which will affect future generations: if we ignore their values, preferences and expectations, our work may run the risk to be incomplete.

Thank you for the good news from Finland.

Emb. Anne Lammila

I feel that it is the responsibility of both mothers and fathers to take care of their children. In Finland it is either the mother or the father who stays home when a child is sick. In any case, I think it is exaggeration to say that a sick child is a real disaster to the employer. Normally, colleagues are able to cover each other's job. Also there is a possibility nowadays to work home or speak over the phone. I agree with you that the means of telecommunication can be useful in this sense.

Comment sent by Aída Margarita Flores, from the Mexican Embassy in South Africa

He tenido la oportunidad de trabajar con colegas que igual que son brillantes diplomáticas, son excelentes madres (verdad, Yanerit?). En lo personal, yo no tengo hijos, pero me he dado cuenta que en esta carrera influye mucho el ámbito familiar para un adecuado desempeño profesional. Puedo imaginar lo difícil que puede ser estar en alguna conferencia internacional y al mismo tiempo saber que algún hijo(a) está enfermo o tiene festival en su colegio. El apoyo de los cónyuges sin duda alguna es importante, pues no se trata sólo de que ayuden, sino de que no "reprochen" después que son ellos los únicos que están presentes en los momentos importantes de la vida de los hijos.

Creo que también vale la pena mencionar, que cuando eres diplomática y no eres la Titular de la Representación, contar con un jefe dispuesto a comprender este doble rol (profesional y madre) es de suma importancia, pues eso también brinda cierta seguridad en el desempeño de nuestro trabajo.

Aunque de manera personal no puedo compartir experiencias por no tener hijos, mi reconocimiento y apoyo a las colegas que demuestran día a día que en nuestra carrera, el hecho de ser madre no es impedimento alguno para tener éxito en la misma.

I have had the opportunity to work with colleagues who are, at the same time, brilliant diplomats and excellent mothers (right, Yanerit?). Personally, I don't have children, but I have realized that, in this career, the family has a great influence on professional performance. I can imagine how difficult it can be to attend an international conference and to know that, at the same time, one of our children is sick or has a presentation for parents at school. Our spouses' support is undoubtedly important, for it is not only a matter of them helping, but also of not complaining later that they are the only ones present in their children's important moments.

I think it is also worth mentioning that, when you are a diplomat and not the Chief of Mission, having a boss who is willing to understand this double role (professional and mother) is of great importance, for this brings security to us while carrying out our functions.

Although I can't share any experiences, for I don't have any children, I acknowledge and support those colleagues who show every day that, in our career, being a mother is no impediment for being successful in it.

Comment sent by Susana Garduño, from the Embassy of Mexico in the United Kingdom

Dear Amb. Lammila and friends, thank you for sharing so openly your visions on these sensitive personal matters. As my colleagues have pointed out, our Foreign Service has still a long way to go in order to address family matters and diplomats' motherhood, but I am glad to know the Finnish Government has that covered and would also be interested in the legislation if the English version exists (otherwise it's never late to start learning!)

I admire Graciela for enduring such important meetings during her breast feeding time and I am glad she found sympathy in a fellow colleague who tried to avoid the long meeting, but I think we shouldn't just have female sympathy but men's as well, after all, didn't they have mothers?

Comment from Beatriz Nava, from the Embassy of Mexico in Singapore

Dear Ambassador Lammila,

It is so inspiring to read what Finland has accomplished in the efforts for promoting equal rights and the right of having functional families within your Foreign Service. It is as well a reminder of the many battles we still need to fight to achieve, step by step, and one day, a similar condition. It would help if in the Foreign Service more and more female diplomats could have the blessing of having a family, a partner and could unite to get fairer conditions to the spouses and children. Hopefully the female solidarity that has been mentioned in the previous topic on women on decision making processes can be applied here to promote a change in the current legislation and regulations. I would definitely be very interested in reading further on the legislation in Finland regarding your Foreign Service and gender.

I know I want to have a family, I know that I want to be a successful diplomat and to read your comments and those of all the participants here that are mothers has been very encouraging as well. *Sí se puede* (yes, we can!), even if it is clear that sacrifices and trade-offs will occur, but that good time management skills, prioritize, as well as the strong support of your partner is essential. Indeed thank you, Ambassador Lammila for choosing this subject in particular. Sometime ago I was not sure that I could fulfill my dream of becoming a mother, but I see now this dream closer to be true, to be able to read these experiences here is very encouraging. It is encouraging to know that I don't have to choose and that being a successful professional does not mean that I have to be alone and unhappy. That it is

possible to have a balanced personal life. It is obviously not easy, but nothing that is worth in life is easy either.

Finally I also appreciate the comments made regarding the lack of sensitivity of bosses regarding the sickness of children. I confess that, even if I have always conceded the permission to my assistant to leave when her son is sick, I haven't always fully understood it. The answer is clear: I don't understand it and I am not completely sensitive to the subject because I am not a mother and I cannot grasp completely what she is feeling when she is asking for a day or two off to be with his kid. I will definitely bear this in mind more often.

CONCLUSIONES



EMB. YANERIT MORGAN

I would like to thank all the participants and my fellow moderators, for their very interested questions and comments. I also thank the Matías Romero Institute for the invitation to participate in this dialogue. It was, for me, a very rich discussion.

Since the beginning of my career as a part of Mexican delegations I have been involved in the consideration of gender issues in the UN field and, as a first conclusion, I can confirm that is not an easy matter.

We are clear that more has to be done to guarantee the participation of women on the negotiation tables, in post conflict, and also for conflict prevention, but there are still many challenges to identify the main obstacles that prevail. Some are more visible than others, as we confirmed with our own experiences as women diplomats.

Our consideration of this issue is very important as a starting point. There are different perspectives about the concept of vulnerability of women, if we need or not gender quotas as affirmative action policies; if we add something different to men in negotiations processes and if that is the main argument for seek the participation of women. There is also the rights approach, as the basic argument.

One important conclusion is that women diplomats as empowered group have a special responsibility to open more doors to other women with the purpose to take this career.

Finally, it is very important to include men in this issue. Gender equality is not a matter of a women groups, it is a common challenge that affects all societies. Gender equality has to be a core issue of the States' policies at the national and international level.

It was a pleasure to participate in this forum.



MIN. MABEL GÓMEZ OLIVER

My gratitude to all participants and moderators for their interesting comments and challenging questions. My special recognition to the Instituto Matias Romero, to its Director General, Pablo Macedo, and to Alina Bassegoda, for organizing this forum, which I enjoyed very much.

Women represent more than half or at least one half of the world population. It is certainly the right time to raise awareness all over the world that economic development is directly linked to empowering women. Not empowering half of the population represents losing that much of opportunities to foster economic growth and wealthier societies. Especially in the developing world, governments should take this fact more seriously if they want to advance development in their countries.

And not only in the economic realm: a vivid and encouraging example of how women are driving forces for change is the participation that they have had in the popular reactions against dictators in the Middle East, where their male dominated societies keep them mostly oppressed.

I would like to see every woman that reaches a medium and high level position to assume a two-fold responsibility in relation to the gender perspective: firstly, to become a mentor for a junior woman diplomat and secondly, to insert the gender perspective in every aspect of her work. If we all do that we will see very soon the result of having assumed those responsibilities, and the transformation that we are able to make.

I wish all my women colleagues great success in their careers and in the challenging goal of obtaining a good balance between work and family.

Finally, I totally subscribe what Yanerit concludes about male participation. They should be part of this discussion so they can also become a driving force.

Muchas gracias a todas!

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