

Costa Rica's Legislature Takes a Step Toward Gender Equality

Costa Rican lawmakers approved two reforms that will improve gender equality in the country Thursday.

The first reform, adopted unanimously, is meant to introduce gender equality within Congress, with the participation of a 7-member Commission for Women in all legislative debates.

Lawmaker Emilia Molina Cruz from the Citizen Action Party, who introduced the bill, commented, "All the political parties represented in the assembly recognize that the Women Commission is relevant as a crucial space where gender equality can be elaborated."

The other bill reformed a 2007 law that discriminated against women by sentencing them to up to seven more years in prison than men when they are found guilty of fraud during a procedure of divorce and assets splitting.

"We don't know why it remained as such, but as a matter of a fact it introduced an abominable discrimination against women, as fraud in such circumstances is a form of patrimonial violence. We had to make up for that mistake," said lawmaker Edgardo Araya Sibaja.

According to the Global Gender Gap report, which ranks gender equality in the realms of health, education, economy and politics, Costa Rica ranked fairly well at the 48th position out of 142 countries.

In April, however, Costa Rica's Social Security System reported that the number of domestic violence victims treated at public hospitals has increased by one-third over the last three years. According to the report, the rate of domestic violence rose from 20.8 cases per 10,000 inhabitants in 2013 to 27.3 in 2015.