



International Day of Women in Diplomacy

30 years of Andorran diplomacy with women at the center of the table

Today we commemorate the role of women in the diplomatic world in the international arena

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Andorra has always had a strong female character

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Today, June 24th, is the International Women in Diplomacy Day. A day proclaimed by consensus by the General Assembly of the United Nations in favor of encouraging and making visible the representation of women in high diplomatic positions, as well as the challenges they face in the exercise of their positions. This second edition coincides with the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the creation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Andorra. A ministry that, since its inception, has been able to count on a large proportion of women who have carried out the work of the country's diplomacy, with the aim of representing, defending and looking after the interests of the Principality abroad. Although the limitations of a small state have been difficult to validate with all international responsibilities and duties, Andorra's foreign policy has been growing constantly since 1993. Andorra has joined, in these 30 years, to 27 international organizations and has been able to establish eight embassies and permanent missions in Paris, Madrid, Brussels, Vienna, Geneva, Strasbourg, Lisbon and New York.

Many projects are being carried out in many and varied topics that range from, for example, non-double taxation agreements, which help to boost our country's economy, to international cooperation projects. All this evolution has been marked by a large female component within Andorran diplomacy. Many women in the country have dedicated their professional and academic lives, and this has helped to improve the opportunities and position of Andorra abroad, also benefiting the day-to-day life of the citizens from the possibilities that the Principality can acquire from outside its borders.

Today we commemorate the figure of all those women who have dedicated their careers to growing the country internationally and to bringing the international opportunities that have helped to improve the Principality. A figure who has managed to break the image of the past of a diplomatic world where everything was men in tuxedo and tie uniforms to achieve parity in the Andorran body, which although there are still steps to go, is shown as an advance towards gender equality. =

FIVE FEMALE DIPLOMATS SHARE THEIR PERSPECTIVES

GOVERN D'ANDORRA



►► A 'collage' of the diplomats.

Diplomatics: History of Andorra

Laura Mora, Gemma Cano, Eva Descarrega, Imma Tor and Maria Ubach talked about the role of women in diplomacy, the successes achieved and the challenges to be met

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The image that we had of diplomacy was that of a series of uniformed men discussing key issues on the international scene, a world with many difficulties for women to have the opportunity to reach managerial positions and it was not so common to see women practicing the profession. But from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Andorra, this has never been quite like this. Since the creation of the ministry 30 years ago, the country has been able to count on a diplomatic corps full of women who have had freedom of access to this profession and have made the Principality grow internationally during these decades. EL PERIÒDIC has spoken

to five Andorran diplomats from different profiles where they have explained the reality of female diplomats, both nationally and internationally, as well as the female role that has led the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to develop diplomatic activity of Andorra exponentially until today. The third secretary Laura Mora, the introducer of ambassadors and head of protocol Gemma Cano, Andorra's ambassador to France and Monaco and permanent delegate to Unesco and the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF), the current minister of Foreign Affairs Imma Tor and her predecessor Maria Ubach, have commented on what the life of a diplomatic woman is like and different aspects surrounding the reality of women in

the world of international relations.

Laura Mora is a 30-year-old young diplomat from the bilateral affairs department who joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs six years ago, with a break in between to further train in the world of international relations at the College of Europe. From her perspective, diplomatic work «I don't think it's a job more directed towards men or women». From the ministry, a large part of its staff are women under a female leadership by Imma Tor. The young diplomat also contemplates the mission to carry out the country through the ministry in helping women in matters of development cooperation, where she emphasizes that «from Andorra, it has always been prioritized, at this level, help women and girls because

they are often the most affected by circumstances. We have seen it in the pandemic and at other times. I find that, if we are trying to help a group, carrying out these actions can promote dialogue», where she also emphasized that «if we specifically want to go in search of a specific target, such as women and girls, I think it's also a good way to involve them and contribute to the vision of the needs of this group».

Gemma Cano, who in her career of 20 years in the world of diplomacy also has a long experience in the world of cooperation, also emphasized this issue, emphasizing that «Andorra's international cooperation has always had very high priorities clear to promote equality between men and women, the empower-

ment of women, the inclusion of girls in all systems and in education», in addition to other priorities where Andorra also provides great help through the ministry, such as climate change matters and, especially, water resources. In this type of field, Cano emphasizes that the role of female diplomats in the international arena «is of great importance, from the projects themselves to the entire decision chain», specifying that many general directors of international cooperation in the different countries are women.

But the female diplomat does not have to stay only in specific areas of the wide diplomatic world. The current minister Tor explains that, with the exception of one director, the ministry currently has women in the various director positions. The minister reports that «the women of Andorra have played and play an important role in the construction of Andorran diplomacy», stressing that the possible reasons for this prominent female participation in the country's diplomacy may be to have «a more versatile side and a particular sensibility for different subjects». Despite this, Tor emphasizes the ability of female diplomats to be key in other and different issues, such as «the role that women very often have in the resolution of conflicts. It is a role that, sometimes in history, has been minimized because these acti-

Andorra's international cooperation has always prioritized gender equality

ons that have been able to have the diplomats are not the ones that are made more public and they have not been seen at the big international meetings, although lately they have been». The minister alleges the performance of great female diplomats who have had great mediating roles to promote understanding between different communities, also having an important role in the reconstruction of countries after disputes. A tangible example could be found in Rwanda, where after the genocide in 1994, «women are considered in this country as the main actors of peace because they had many actions to contribute to the fact that the Tutsi and Hutu communities could come to understand each other and live together again in the territory». Examples like this explain their abilities that «sometimes we can have a slightly more practical sense and the possibility of being very versatile». For this reason, Tor wishes that diplomatic women «can assume power at all stages of decision-making and, in particular, each and every stage of a peace process in all kinds of areas, such as example, the military». This is an area in which many international organizations do a lot to promote the position of women, since, historically, they have not been able to obtain representation.



EVA DESCARREGA
AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE

«There are more women ambassadors at Unesco than at the bilateral level, where the issues are more political»

«Naturally, when you think with a woman, you do it in certain areas. And in the political sphere, you think more of men than of women»



IMMA TOR
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

«Women can have a slightly more practical sense and the possibility of being very versatile»

«[I hope that] women can assume power at all stages of decision-making in all kinds of areas»



MARIA UBACH
EXMINISTRA D'AFERS EXTERIORS

«Both men and women are important, there must be a gender balance in diplomacy»

«This new generation of diplomats will be very beneficial to give a boost to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs»



LAURA MORA
THIRD SECRETARIAT

«[The diplomatic profession] I don't think it's a job more geared towards men or women»

«[In the ministry] there are women who, without them, I would not have built my career in this way»



GEMMA CANO
INTRODUCTION OF AMBASSADORS

«It is a profession that sacrifices a lot on a personal level, for conciliation. A monumental job is done»

«Andorra's challenges are the same as any other state. We must fulfill the same commitments and agreements»

As Minister Tor mentions, the female diplomat has proven to be versatile and adaptable in the many areas of her profession. And there are still challenges of inclusion throughout the international diplomatic world, where the presence of women still needs to be encouraged in order to be fairly equal in many areas. This was pointed out by Ambassador Eva Descarrega, who emphasized that in her experience in Paris and in her 26 years in the world of diplomacy, she has verified that there is a difference in the presence of women in managerial positions depending on the subject in which they focus on. Descarrega explains that «within France, it is a strategic place, politically speaking, for most states in the world, and especially for Europeans, there is a percentage of 25% of female ambassadors, because it is a place very political, basically. Then, for example, if we look at Unesco, it happens the other way around. We would be 55% female ambassadors». According to Descarrega, this fact derives from erroneous perspectives that correlate themes and gender. The ambassador

clarified those areas «such as education, culture or human sciences, are seen more as in the female field. Therefore, there are more women ambassadors in Unesco than at the bilateral level where the issues are more political, and men are thought of more than women. Then, naturally, when you think about a woman, it is done in certain areas, and when you think about the political area, it is done more with men than with women».

This is an example of the challenges that remain to be overcome in the field of women in the diplomatic world. Another intrinsic difficulty in this profession that every diplomat experiences would be the conciliation between the professional and personal spheres. Our protagonists relate that the life of a diplomat is very demanding and does not know easy hours. Andorra, with a limited population, must fulfill the obligations required of an entire state in diplomatic matters with fewer resources than other countries with more capacity. Gemma Cano emphasizes that «Andorra's challenges are the same as any

other state. In the end, we have to comply with the same commitments and we are part of the same agreements and organizations. And the truth is, with the few people we have at the level of all the institutions, and I also include civil society, a monumental job is done». Cano gives the example of the routine of embassies, where time differences can be a hard condition when it comes to working or going to a multitude of meetings with high professional demands and in areas of a highly technical nature. Regarding the difficulties of this job, Cano understands that anyone who wants to become a diplomat must be aware of the accelerated pace at which they work, which does not allow much leisure or family time. Cano points out that «it is a profession that sacrifices a lot on a personal level, because of the issue of conciliation and we are small teams» in the Andorran diplomatic corps, demanding that these professionals do their best to be at the service of the country.

To cope with the great demands that the Principality requires, for-

mer minister Ubach emphasizes that «both men and women are important, and there must always be a balance». The previous minister emphasizes that «Andorran diplomacy is very young, it is 30 years old, and the ministry has always been very feminine, most of the workers are women». Nevertheless, Ubach mentions that «I like to talk about balance between women and men, because everything adds up and it is always very positive that there can be this possibility of working between the two genders». In addition, the previous minister highlighted a key element in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in Andorran diplomacy. The correlation between seniority and youth is an intrinsic factor in their organizational culture. Ubach left Tor a ministry with a good set of young people who, in his words, «I can affirm that the work of this new generation will be very beneficial to give an impetus to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs». In addition, the former minister wanted to make «an appeal to the young people who are still studying, so that they appreciate that there is this job of representing our country internationally so that they think that it is an interesting career. I am also addressing the young women who are studying a career in politics or which can lead to the mi-

The combination of veterans and youth is a fundamental pillar in the ministry

nistry, where very interesting work is carried out and which can provide many opportunities».

Young people like Laura Mora, who entered this world at the age of 24. The third secretariat has been able to learn a lot of knowledge from the most veteran diplomats, as well as bring new perspectives to Andorran diplomacy. Mora reports that being part of the Andorran ministry «is a very good opportunity. It is a challenge to be part of such a young team, but at the same time we also have professionals with a lot of experience who act as our mentors. I think the important part is the fact that the ministry is made up of a large group of young people, but that it receives support from figures with many years in the profession who act as references». Mora highlights the good synergy that occurs between both groups, so that «young people bring a more youthful vision in aspects such as digitization, social networks or being more versatile, but always based on what we have learned from the references we have had». Finally, Mora mentions that the most experienced diplomats have become «reference women without whom I would not have built my career in this way». ≡