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Women leaders here to draft a vision

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Women leaders from 34 nations gathered in Miami Sunday to discuss ways for women to gain greater economic power and influence in their countries.

Vice presidents, attorney generals, cabinet members and other top leaders are among the participants of the Women's Hemispheric Conference, which continues today and Tuesday at the Hotel InterContinental.

The conference, which was organized and sponsored by Miami Dade Community College's Wolfson Campus, is a precursor to the Summit of the Americas conference Dec. 9-11.

Participants in this week's conference will draft a "vision statement" of economic, educational and democratic goals for women in the coming decade. That docu-

ment will be passed on to the presidents and prime ministers who will discuss goals for this hemisphere at the Summit of the Americas.

"You can't talk about the development of a country, without talking about the role of women in that development," said Guadalupe Jerezano-Mejia, the first woman to be elected vice president of Honduras.

At a cocktail reception Sunday night, Jerezano-Mejia and other women leaders mingled and discussed some of the issues they'll be raising during the next two days.

Many of those initiatives deal with better educational programs for young women, and ways to eliminate negative and subordinate gender roles that get passed on to little girls at an early age.

Costa Rican Vice President Rebecca Gynspan Mayufis said



C.W. GRIFFIN / Herald Staff

LEADING THE WAY: Guadalupe Jerezano-Mejia and Rebecca Gynspan Mayufis discuss some of the issues they'll be raising.

it's important to make education more accessible to young women in this hemisphere. Decades of free public education have helped make Costa Rica one of Latin America's more progressive countries in terms of women's advancement, she said.

Gynspan Mayufis is the second woman to be vice president

in Costa Rica, and she estimated that in the current administration, 20 percent of the high-ranking positions are held by women.

"One thing that everyone knows is that women face obstacles getting into economic mainstream, and that's the real issue," said Gynspan Mayufis. "It's not enough just to talk about it, you have to get organized and put it forward."