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THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT OF SPAIN CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY WITH A TRIBUTE TO GLORIA BEGUÉ, ITS FIRST FEMALE MAGISTRATE

The Constitutional Court organized today an event in support of International Women's Day, during which it honoured the first female magistrate to join this institution and the first to become Vice-President, Gloria Begué Cantón, who passed away just over a year ago.

Gloria Begué was ground-breaking in all the professional activities she embarked during her career. At university, she became the first female full professor in a law faculty and the first chairwoman. In the Constituent Sessions of the Spanish Parliament, she was appointed Senator in 1977. Later, she was appointed Magistrate to the Constitutional Court in 1980 upon request of the Senate. She finally became the first woman to enter the institution and to vest, between 1986 and 1989, its vice-presidency.

Out of 63 Magistrates who have served at the Constitutional Court from its inception until the present day, only 6 were women; for more than a decade, between 1989 (the year in which Begué ceased to serve) and 1998 (the year in which María Emilia Casas joined), no woman was appointed to the position of Constitutional Magistrate; likewise, the Constitutional Court has never had more than two women among its members throughout its history and the bodies responsible for proposing candidates for the partial renewal taking place every three years (the Senate, the Congress, the Government and the General Council of the Judiciary) have never produced a list of three candidates including more than one woman.

For all these reasons, in honouring their first female predecessor, the President of the Constitutional Court, Juan José González Rivas, and its Vice-President, Encarnación Roca Trías, as well as all the members of the Court, also wished to promote a greater presence of women with the primary objective of achieving parity between men and women within the institution.

As the supreme interpreter of the Constitution and the protector of fundamental rights, the Constitutional Court must be an example, including in its composition, of the effective implementation of the right to equality.

The event, held in the Court's Hearing Room, was attended by Magistrate Emeritus María Emilia Casas, the only woman to have held the Presidency of the Constitutional Court, who called for a greater presence of women *"in the constitutional jurisdictional bodies"*. Although a large number of women work in the Constitutional Court every day, *"the symbolic weight of the presence of women in the Magistracy, which brings values of equality, is undeniable and offers a clear message that, without women, there can be no justice or democracy"*.

The former President of the Court praised the important work that, throughout its history and despite the scarce presence of women magistrates, the institution has carried out in the defence of women's rights and the eradication of discrimination.

The ceremony was closed by Magistrate María Luisa Balaguer, who drew a portrait of Gloria Begué. She said that she had *“traversed new paths for women, until then reserved for men, and contributed actively and decisively to the fact that many other women could walk them”*. Indeed, she was a woman who, with the hundreds of judgements she drafted, contributed significantly to ensuring compliance with the fundamental rights and, in particular, to eliminating discrimination, which our Constitution prohibits.

Madrid, 8 March 2018.