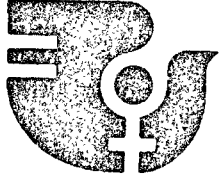




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WORLD CONFERENCE  
OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR  
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Agenda item 8

THE INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN IN STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND  
ELIMINATING RACISM, APARTHEID, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, ALIEN DOMINATION  
AND THE ACQUISITION OF TERRITORIES BY FORCE

Statement submitted by International Youth and Student Movement for  
the U.N. (Category I), All India Women's Conference, Friends World  
Committee for Consultation, International Movement for Fraternal  
Union Among Races and Peoples, Pax Christi International Catholic  
Peace Movement, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom  
(Category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following statement to be distributed  
to the World Conference of the International Women's Year in conformity with  
rule 54 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Conference.

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE STRENGTHENING  
OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE

The organizations listed above who share a deep concern for peace, welcome the inclusion of peace in the aims of International Women's Year. They consider it of crucial importance to the future of humanity that the United Nations World Conference of the International Women's Year stresses "Participation by Women in the strengthening of international peace".

Women, whose age-old function of reconciliation within families and small communities has helped preserve the human family, have been helpless before international conflicts which twist and destroy their lives, their families and their homes.

The following points are relevant for the greater participation by women in strengthening peace between nations.

1. The statement that "Women are the natural enemies of war" strikes a responsive chord, especially in an age when countless mothers see their children die of hunger, disease and war while the nations of the world pour 240 billion dollars annually into armaments. Women's strong concern for disarmament was demonstrated by the statement of 250 women from 27 countries at the "Women and Disarmament" Seminar held at the United Nations, 7-9 May 1975, when they deplored the fact that "world military expenditures exceeded world expenditures for health and education". Women, therefore, consider immediate and practical steps towards total and complete disarmament to be the utmost priority. What would be saved in funds, and in human and material resources could be channelled to the unmet needs of the human family.

People would feel safer on the planet if all indiscriminate weaponry (including nuclear instruments of genocide) were definitely banned and moves made to dismantle them.

2. Women know that justification for wars, whether on political or other grounds, have always been a male prerogative. Women as scholars, theologians and political scientists have serious contributions to offer in analysis and criticism of the so-called "just war" approaches. Women are increasingly questioning the possibility of a just war in the modern situation when genocide can occur.

3. Family education should be designed to encourage people to be peacemakers. Family education that stresses the importance of reconciliation and that respects the rights of the child is basic to a peaceful society.

4. Education in general needs new peace initiatives. Just as this World Conference has confronted the "negative stereotypes" of women and has faced the great task of "unlearning" prejudices so that the objective truth may be represented, so the "positive stereotypes" of war need to be "unlearned". Too much of the history taught

in schools is a litany of glorious battles in which war is presented as a school of heroism and as the human enterprise which calls forth the greatest measure of courage and devotion to the common good. The actualities of modern war must be taught so that the generation of military age may see armed conflict as a technological monster capable of vaporizing large segments of the human race and of rendering our earthly home uninhabitable.

5. Women, who, in general, have not been conscripted for war service, have the duty to work along with men for the human right of refusal to bear weapons or to kill. Young people in increasing numbers in many countries reject war and support the non-violent methods of conflict resolution which women practise in resolving domestic conflicts. These methods were developed systematically in Gandhian satyagraha. Those who object on grounds of conscience to military service and participation in war should be given the option to perform the works of peace in programmes of development and compassion. The tasks of feeding, healing and sheltering suffering human beings, especially those who are victims of discrimination, abject poverty and violence, are surely the way to the United Nations aim of "a warless world", an obvious human right for all people.

The theme carved on the wall of the Plenary Conference Hall, "Peace is Respect for the Rights of Others", reminds us that such respect is intimately and irrevocably linked with the making and preservation of societal and international peace. One of the key elements of this Conference, we feel, is the greater and more direct involvement of women with men in the avoidance of war and the strengthening of peace. In the nuclear age, more and more people subscribe to the dictum that "There is no way to peace; peace is the way".

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