

WILPF at the UN

Report and photos by Jean Verthein



Hiroshima trade center, 1945 Memorial 2010 targeted and bombed on August 6, as ordered by the US president at the end of World War II. Anguish over human survival and

rebuilding the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki flattened in the bombing continued, *Hibakusha*, survivors, grouped together for rights to medical help. They also organized to oppose and still actively do against future use of the atomic bomb. Anti-nuclear activists, including WILPF members have joined this international movement that will gather at the UN in New York City for the in May 4-15. Some will go on to Japan the sixty-fifth anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 2010.

WILPFers and Friends of WILPF at UN DPI/NGO Conference, Mexico City

Nuclear disarmament strategies, military budgets and gang use of small arms stirred about 1300 attendees at the recent UN conference for NGOs. Such issue panels prepared the groundwork for the Review of the Non-proliferation Treaty in May 6 through 26, 2010.

The whole peace effort to back the NPT, other

treaties and initiatives sprang out of the August 6 and 9 US bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

As diplomats convene on the NPT itself, side events will occur in buildings around the closed UN building under repair. Governmental disarmament agencies will track developments under the existing NPT.

NGOs and their coalitions will host thematic meetings. Torchlight parades and marches will pass through many countries and end up in New York.

To prepare for the NPT Review in May 2010, six WILPF members participated in this process the annual United Nations Department of Information this past fall in Mexico City on disarmament.

This September 2009 week long conference drew an estimated 300 non-governmental organizations from countries around the globe and some international ones.

WILPF works with many other organizations, such as Mayors for Peace and will collaborate with many of the NPT Review presentations. So far, 3105 cities have joined Mayors for Peace, and declared their cities nuclear free, including Mexico City. But New York City and Washington, D.C. have not.

In 2010, the UN will launch the Decade for Disarmament Citizen Activism.

See the WILPF-backed ongoing information source, used by activists, government officials and diplomats:
www.reachingcriticalwill.com
For marches, meetings, statements and political details.

Check other websites:

http://www.abolition2000.org/a2000files/2009_A2000_AGM_minutes.doc

<http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/NPT2010Prepcom/PrepCom2009/>



WILPFer remarks on panel discussions and debates follow regarding disarmament.

Marie-Claire Faray Kele, Medical Researcher, WILPF, UK/Congo, WILPF International Board and IANASA, International Action Network on Small Arms

In the panel, "Gun Violence: Women Speak Out," headlined "Small arms facilitate violence against women in every country of the world. From sexual violence as a weapon of war, to armed domestic violence in countries at peace, women bear the brunt of the arms trade."

Marie-Claire Faray Kele emphasized her central point. Arms, military ones, not human ones, clamp down on women. These "instruments of patriarchy" maintain "violent masculinity," with sexual assault. She specified her country of origin the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Matriarchy originally prevailed, she noted, in the Congo River area of Africa. Patriarchy though with Christianity and colonialism supplanted matriarchy with its nature goddesses.

The UN, she charged, also uses patriarchy, though Security Council Resolution 1325. It might benefit women. But it possesses no tools, "no gender architecture," to implement this resolution. "There is no legal framework for accountability. Nor is there any example of a country that supports resolution 1325 for women in the Congo to follow."

Elimination of cultures, especially indigenous cultures, served as a theme of the Mexico City UN conference.

Use of guns exerts authority over the Congolese clans, and in so doing changes many institutions. "Now with war, women cannot participate in their country as citizens."

In the sixteenth century, women were in the forefront against colonialism. After years of actual enslavement within colonialism and the removal of indigenous culture, Lumumba and others liberated the Congolese people.*

During questions and answers, she added, "The United States made sure that the Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba was killed." It wanted to establish capitalism in Africa and insure the Congolese were not in charge."

"Now the US is militarizing the resource-rich area

of the Congo." Letting in former rebels enables probing for natural resources for nuclear power.

"Big powers compete for control of western Congo. China and the US are playing a nasty game there."

***See** Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* and De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*.

Jacqueline Cabasso, Monteray, WILPF member and Executive Director and founder of the Western States Legal Foundation. 2008 Sean McBride award Winner.

She chaired the meeting on Abolition of nuclear weapons at this conference. "Ask," she said, "for what we want, not what we think we can get."

She outlined efforts toward nuclear Abolition. "The unexpected end of the cold war lead to the expectation of a peace dividend." This shift could have "ended nuclear stockpiling, and freed up resources." She cited the memorable 1994 UN DPI briefing by the United Nations Development head Mahbub Al Haq from Pakistan. "He redefined security in universal and individual ways."

Instead of "independent thinking about the role of governments and human needs" for employment, medical care for children or family support in Afghanistan, scientists prevailed.

From Livermore Laboratories, they proved themselves "powerful lobbyists for new bases for the military-industrial complex."

"Why are," Jackie Cabasso asked, "nuclear weapons still present?" To deconstruct the cold war, the standoff between the United States and the USSR, Russia, she noted this. "Nuclear weapons are the ultimate power projection. The elites, rich and powerful, the top two per cent benefit."

She emphasized that competition for natural resources is occurring within the global political realignment.



She cited Peacewomen, a WILPF effort run from its UN office and until recently directed by Sam Cook. Its work for peace highlights sexual violence against women for conquest in war zones. Ray Acheson emphasized the need to end impunity in this area. “Disarmament must be for promotion of all persons’ rights to human security.”

She roused great applause for broadening the approach to disarmament. She imagined a renewed full fledged anti-nuclear campaign.

From the podium, she also acknowledged WILPFers seated in front: Jackie Cabasso, Marie-Claire Kele Fraya, Elizabeth Adams and Jean Verthein, NGO Representative to the U N for WILPF, US.

Ray Acheson, Project Associate, Reaching Critical Will (RCW) for WILPF, United Nations Office, rang out a declaration on discourse. A quiet and highly focused researcher and writer on nuclear issues, assisting ambassadors and governments, she speaks like an orator.

“Like it, anti-nuclear campaigners must make convincing terms against governments. She counseled guidance from the landmine movement.

“What good is it talking just about disarmament? Build legitimacy,” she said, “through expanded common discourse.”

Her premise goes something like this. Nuclear weapons are to human security as economic inequalities are to social justice. Nuclear weapons belong to national security, not human security. Elite security, namely that of the military-industrial complex elites, who maintain instruments of violent destruction for their own benefit.

“Insecurity is necessary to maintain the status quo—the existence of nuclear weapons in the hands of the powerful.”

She urging the anti-nuclear movements to “create its own discourse” by including those who work for social justice.

See also for background information on :

www.armscontrol.org/pressroom/2008/2008049_NSNG_appeal



AnnJanette R0osga, WILPF’s United Nations office director in New York City and **Susi Snyder**, until recently General Secretary of WILPF’s international office in Geneva, Switzerland created a skit at a panel introducing the preparatory committee (“prepcom”) for the upcoming 2010 UN Review of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. (NPT), May 3-18, 2010.