

Colombia: Women Seek to Overcome the Barriers to Participation in Order to Achieve Peace

13th of October 2015, Bogotá – The National Summit of Women and Peace is an arena for the coming together of 9 proponents of women's and human rights organizations from Colombia. It combines with the commemoration of the 15th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 which is taking place today in open debate at the UN in New York, and calls for the participating countries to comply with the Resolution quickly and speedily.

Resolution 1325 consolidates the Women, Peace and Security Agenda internationally and it is the first resolution which links the experiences of women during the armed conflicts to the priorities of the States in achieving peace and security throughout the world. It stresses the disproportionate impact of the war on women's lives and bodies and calls on the world to include women in the prevention of conflict and in peaceful negotiation to put an end to conflicts and to include women in the post-conflict peace-building.

In spite of the many calls and efforts made to achieve this in Colombia, Resolution 1325 has still not achieved its anticipated impact. From the National Summit of Women and Peace, we recognize what has been achieved so far in relation to the inclusion of women and a gender perspective within the framework of the negotiations in Havana for the end of the armed conflict. However, we emphatically reiterate that the participation of women in every one of the established scenarios must be joint, alternate and universal.

We greatly welcomed the announcement on 23rd of September of the agreement in Havana between the Colombian government and FARC-EP (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army), which creates a special system of justice as part of the integral system of truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition. We consider that this step will make a positive contribution towards ensuring the rights of female victims (women and girls) in order to succeed in building a fairer and peaceful society. However, we strongly criticize the lack of equal numbers of women at the formal ceremony, both at the main table and in the high-level positions and in several sub-committees. This symbolizes, for us the women of Colombia, the lack of visibility of our ethical and political contribution, proposals and commitments in the name of peace.

In this sense, within the framework of the international anniversary of Resolution 1325, the women at the national Summit of Women and Peace are working towards the shared objective of making visible the historic role that women have played in building peace in Colombia and their role as a collective political subject with the capacity for national and local dialogue. This is to ensure the effective inclusion and participation of women in all the present and future spaces of negotiation and countersignature, verification and implementation of peace agreements, to guarantee the conditions for non-repetition.

For the above, our proposals focus on point six of Havana: the implementation, verification and counter-signature of the agreed points, which include:

- Full support for the peace process.
- To request that the parties provide equal representation of women throughout the whole negotiation process.
- To create a high-level, robust institution to represent the issue of gender and guarantee its inclusion in all the stages of implementation, verification and counter-signature
- To demand a bilateral ceasefire, reduction in military expenses and the elimination of obligatory military service.
- To demand investment in education on an equal footing for boys and girls and stress the importance of creating Chairs in peace which will transform scenarios of social violence into places of peace.
- Demand parity in women's political participation and in the mechanisms of implementation and strengthening of the democracy which will arise after signing of the agreement, taking account of their diversity (race, ethnicity, age, class, territory).

On the National Summit of Women and Peace:

The National Summit of Women and Peace comprises 9 platforms of women's and human rights organizations. Corporación Casa de la Mujer, Ruta Pacifica de las Mujeres, Red Nacional de Mujeres, Coalición 1325, Asociación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas, Negras e Indígenas de Colombia (ANMUCIC), Conferencia Nacional de Organizaciones Afrocolombianas (CNOA), Mujeres por la Paz, Alianza Iniciativa de Mujeres Colombianas por la Paz (IMP), Colectivo de Pensamiento y Acción Mujeres, Paz y Seguridad and Mujeres por la Paz.

The National Summit of Women and Peace originates from the event which took place in October 2013 in which more than 400 women from the whole country participated; women representing a variety of organizations: feminist, Human Rights, rural women, victims, indigenous women, people of African descent, students, youngsters, environment, union, Raizal people, LGBTI; representatives from the business, educational, academic and cultural sectors; national and territorial peace initiatives, churches, political parties, universities, research centres, communication media and sports people.

At this plural and diverse event, proposals, alliances and aims were agreed from different ideological sides and positions in relation to the processes and actions needed to build peace, within the framework of the negotiation process carried out in Havana - Cuba.

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