

## **South American Sections' Message to the Third Annual Meeting of the Community of Latin America and the Caribbean**

To the Presidents and Leaders of Central America and the Caribbean:

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Latin American Sections welcome you to the Third Annual Meeting of CELAC (Community of Latin America and the Caribbean) in Costa Rica from 26 - 29 January 2015. We hope that the meeting brings forth ties of solidarity and cooperation among our countries.

WILPF is the longest serving women's peace organisation, founded in 1915. It advocates for an inclusive security, for the voices of women to be heard, and for the compliance of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 from women's perspective. Our region faces a serious arms proliferation problem, high military expenses and militarisation of police forces. The growing number of small arms in the hands of private security forces, in the streets, and in private hands has caused an increase in homicides, femicides and assaults, making many of our countries insecure and, in some areas, similar to war zones. Democracy, with such a high level of insecurity, along with high levels of poverty and inequality faces instability and risks to economic and social development.

As women, we see a greater danger in the proliferation of small arms and light arms because we are more vulnerable to aggression, domestic violence, rape, trafficking, forced prostitution and slavery, which are all crimes committed on women, usually with the use of arms. We are aware of the dangers our countries face due to drug trafficking, the trafficking in persons and terrorism but we firmly believe that an increase in arms and militarisation is not a solution. The professionalisation of the police should not mean military equipment or training that overrides human rights. Resources spent in combat equipment and training need to be invested in education and health, decent housing and guaranteed social and economic justice for all segments of the population. And women need to be included in all decisions regarding the peace and welfare of each and every country.

Last but not least, we congratulate you for the achievements made through CELAC and we are proud to be part of a region that has declared to be free of nuclear arms and which supports peaceful solutions and peace processes.

WILPF Costa Rica, WILPF Mexico, WILPF Bolivia, WILPF Colombia

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