

report/women's activism

The global women's movement must be at the forefront of the fight against the war in Ukraine and oppose the increased military spending that will have tragic consequences for the lives and health of people and the environment. It must do everything to bring the current conflict in Ukraine to an end



We should recognize that the international political scene today, and the instrumentalization of the peoples' desire for security, leads to their exploitation by the imperialist centers, with consequences for their human rights and political and economic independence.

The UN Security Council in 2000 adopted Resolution 1325, aiming at women's participation in conflict resolution processes but also highlighting the consequences and disproportionately negative impact of war and conflict on women and girls, including through rape and other forms of sexual abuse.

The unanimous adoption of such a document was a recognition of both gender inequalities and the contribution women can make to conflict prevention and resolution around the world. Women are victims and continue to experience the most horrific effects of conflicts at the same time as they shoulder a significant part of the burden of rebuilding the social fabric of post-conflict societies.

The effective participation of women in peace processes is a dynamic process of gender mainstreaming and equality. Studies and research have shown that when women are involved in peace processes, agreements are formed that are 35% stronger and are likely to last more than 15 years. This is particularly important in the traditionally male-dominated security sector, in which issues related to the conflict cycle are addressed.

I want to note here that experience has shown that the participation of women in decision-making is not in itself necessarily associated with peace and justice. We should not stand by and watch women unleash wars, initiate conflicts and follow, or even set out, policies that make people refugees or cause death and destruction. Instead, we should move in the direction of equality and equal participation in decision-making. The participation of women in decision-making processes should enable voices to be heard who speak for the millions of women who are raped, killed, become refugees and victims of impoverishment and who suffer physically and psychologically, in every corner of the globe.

With these few words I want to point out that our world is not a progressive world. It is not getting better, and it is not getting easier for people, especially women. Day after day, new forms of exploitation are coming into being and many of them are somehow hidden, masked as development and great opportunities for women.

I have discussed all of the above in order to explain why I hold that the role of the WIDF should be more proactive than ever. The WIDF should develop ever more links, along with institutional interventions according to the major issues for which our countries struggle. The scores of organizations and millions of women whose voices are raised across the globe should be used to put pressure on institutions, governments, and policy makers.

We should undertake initiatives to revitalise WIDF activities at the local, regional, and international level, because today, more than ever, there is a need for a strong WIDF that can represent the women of the world, empower them to continue their struggle and echo their voice so that it is heard in every corner of the globe.

And women must be present and active everywhere for another reason too. If workers are to win their battle, half of them, the women, cannot be missing. If the struggle for world peace is to be won, half of humanity cannot be absent.

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'Women must be present everywhere and active for peace'



Skevi Koukouma reflects on the 17th Congress of the Women's

International Democratic Federation, the disproportionate impact of war and imperialism on women as well as the crucial role of women in conflict resolution

RECENTLY, WOMEN from all over the world participated in the 17th congress of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) under the slogan "Women of the world, united for the elimination of inequality and violence and for peace and health on the planet". The conference focused on the catastrophic consequences of the pandemic and the ongoing war between Russia and NATO in Ukraine.

The congress adopted a declaration emphasizing that both these events have affected and destroyed the lives of millions of people, especially women and children. That is why the global women's movement must be at the forefront of the fight against the war in Ukraine and oppose the increased military spending that will have tragic consequences for the lives and health of people and the environment. It must do everything to bring the current conflict in Ukraine to an end.

The catastrophic resumption of the arms race, as well as the stripping away of huge resources that could be invested in the health and well-being of humanity and the planet, rekindles old tensions and opens new ones, and risks even more dire consequences, including a nuclear conflagration.

According to analyses presented during the conference, the roots of the war lie in the reckless attempt of the US and its European allies to expand NATO in order to regain economic and political supremacy and maintain their position as sole "regulator" of the world, holding sway over countries and peoples.

In this context, the weakening of the United Nations system over the last thirty years, and the demise of international means of negotiating and maintaining the balance of power that existed in the past, is an added cause for concern.

The conference included thematic discussions on the consequences of the pandemic and the degraded and commercialized health systems that are particularly felt by women, younger generations, and the masses.

Delegates talked about the extreme polarization of the distribution of resources, both globally and within countries, as well as the criminal concentration of wealth in the hands of a few - while, at the same time, we are witnessing the expansion and intensification of various forms of economic exploitation and the growth of absolute poverty.

Protection

The protection of health and the environment, stable employment, women's employment and insurance rights, the care and education of children, support for the elderly and disabled with free public services and infrastructure that are a prerequisite for women's equality were also discussed. Their absence leads to the loss of rights that have already been achieved through decades of struggle.

Lack of protection and abuse of young women and girls, child marriages, food crises, poverty and unequal pay for equal work was another focus of the congress. Despite advances in legislation against gender-based violence, impunity and justification for crimes against women and girls, cases of gang rape against women and girls, and cases of unjust abortion convictions, continue to show that rapists go free while women are criminalized. Unfortunately, statistics on child pregnancies and girls giving birth as a consequence of the pandemic restrictions have not yet been recorded. But this was a time in which children gave birth to children.

The congress called for the release of women political prisoners and an end to the persecution of women who defend women's rights and who have opposed women in public office who have pursued neoliberal policies.

There were discussions on ending discrimination based on sexual orientation, race and religion, combating human trafficking, tackling immigration and eliminating the causes that force millions to flee their country because of poverty and war.