

Newsletter



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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

ADOPTION OF THE WOMEN'S GLOBAL CHARTER FOR HUMANITY

Delegates of the World March of Women gathered in Kigali, Rwanda, adopted the **Women's Global Charter for Humanity** on December 10, 2004.

The Women's Global Charter for Humanity is a proposal to build a world where exploitation, oppression, intolerance and exclusion no longer exist and where integrity, diversity and the rights and freedoms of all are respected. This world is founded on **equality**, **freedom**, **solidarity**, **justice and peace**.

The Charter contains 31 affirmations describing the principles essential to the construction of such a world. It is accompanied by two other texts designed to facilitate its comprehension and use. These documents explain the origin of the Charter, its distinctive nature and the March's analysis and demands for the elimination of poverty and violence against women. They also include a series of conditions that must be met so the world described in the Charter can come into being.

The global launch of the Relay is taking place on March 8, 2005, in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The Relay will proceed from March 8 to October 17, 2005, with stops in 53 countries. During the Relay, women will create a Global Patchwork Solidarity Quilt. The Relay will conclude on October 17, 2005, in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. On October 17, 2005, at noon, women will organize the 24 Hours of Feminist Solidarity, from Oceania (East) to West.

Brigitte Verdière, Communications Officer, International Secretary.

THE WOMEN'S GLOBAL CHARTER FOR HUMANITY ADOPTED IN THE SHADOW OF ARMED CONFLICT

By organizing the 5th International Meeting in Rwanda, the women of the World March of Women wanted to pay tribute to the victims of that country's genocide in 1994 and demonstrate their ability to act together to build the world they believe in.

The meeting began with a tribute to the thousands of victims of the genocide that occurred in the country between April and June 1994. We denounced the failure of the United Nations and its members states and the direct intervention by arms traffickers and businessmen from so-called First World countries. We denounced the racism and intolerance instituted by the colonialists and that so many people—whether they belonged to political circles or not—carried on.

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In contrast, we celebrated the capacity of women from the countries and ethnic groups involved in the conflict to create room for dialogue and mutual respect and trust, which served as the basis to act together. There was so much to separate them! But they found ways to build bridges and re-establish ties.

The shadow of armed conflict continues to loom in the region of the African Great Lakes, and we felt its weight at the meeting. It wasn't the first time. We were together in Montréal, in 2001, when the United States invaded Afghanistan. We were together in New Delhi when the United States invaded Iraq. Each time, we broke off our discussions to go into the streets to protest against the imperialist war. That's the nature of our history: united in action, in struggle and resistance, and capable of maintaining a dialogue among ourselves, drawing nearer in our analyses, the result of our diverse experiences. Patriarchal capitalism generates confrontation and competition between peoples and nations, and between women. Our challenge is to rise above our divisions and isolation to build egalitarian alliances.

The Women's Global Charter for Humanity is an agreement established between national coordinating bodies in 50 countries, of whom 35 were represented in Rwanda. National, regional and continental bodies were strengthened by assertions and demands corresponding to their circumstances and their organizational methods. The Charter will be fleshed out on its voyage around the world. It will be fulfilled in action, and this action will change our way of seeing the world and the way we can transform it.

With the World March of Women we try to reinforce a feminist space that is radically engaged in achieving self-determination for women. The focus that gives this struggle shape is the global criticism of capitalism, which includes all forms of oppression: class, ethnic group and gender, among others. To put an end to our oppression, we must be able to make independent decisions about our bodies and our lives, without bowing to pressure from men, religious and State institutions or market demands.

Miriam Nobre, World March of Women, Brazil

Women Appeal for Peace

We, women of the World March of Women, who are gathered in Kigali, Rwanda, from December 4–12, 2004, for the 5th International Meeting, are issuing an appeal for peace in the Great Lakes Region of Africa and throughout the world.

We are deeply concerned by an escalation of the persistent wars and armed conflicts in the Great Lakes Region.

We note with bitterness:

- that women and children are particularly affected by these conflicts and

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suffer grave consequences. These include killings, sexual violence—especially rape used as a weapon of war —violence of all kinds, kidnappings, sex trafficking, massive forced displacements of civilians, deepening poverty, and the spread of HIV/AIDS;

- that the fundamental cause of violence against women is a solidly entrenched patriarchal system that marginalizes women and denies them their needs and rights on the basis of their gender;

- the non-application of Resolution 1325 of the United Nations Security Council;

- that, despite their assigned mandate, peacekeepers in the sub-region are not improving the situation, and that some of them are also committing acts of sexual violence, which is aggravating the conflict;

- that the international conflict management system, such as United Nations mechanisms, is not effective;

- that the uncontrolled manufacture, sale and distribution of arms contributes to persistent insecurity and destabilization of the sub-region and also of the whole world;

- that the culture of impunity has taken root in the sub-region and throughout the world;

- that war is the result of patriarchy and an unjust system of distribution and access to the world's wealth;

- that the rebel groups and other negative forces, who are driven by a genocidal ideology, are still operating in the Great Lakes Region of Africa;

- that political and economic powers are encouraging this situation to further their self-centred economic interests.

We denounce:

- the rebel groups and negative forces that are still present in the sub-region, who are causing instability, raping women, young girls—even other men—and thereby jeopardizing the peace;

- the negative role played by national and international media, whose messages heighten the conflicts by distorting reality.

We call for:

- the international community to pressure and hold accountable the sub-region's governments that were party to the accords and have not respected those agreements.

- the United Nations to adapt its mandate to the situation in the countries of the Great Lakes and immediately disarm the rebel groups and negative forces in the sub-region;

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- the governments of the countries in the Great Lakes region to resolve their conflicts through genuine dialogue by engaging women in the process, in conformance with Resolution 1325 of the United Nations Security Council;

We demand:

- that women be recognized as actors and negotiators for peace and that they participate in all peaceful conflict prevention, management and resolution processes, as well as in the reconstruction of their respective countries;

- that the African Union assume its responsibility by becoming effectively involved in resolving conflicts between African countries;

We call on:

- the different governments of the sub-region to respect the commitments they undertook in signing the different peace accords; enact a ceasefire; disarm the negative forces; and apply the non-aggression pacts.

We appeal:

- to the civilian population in countries torn by conflict to denounce all human rights violations, in particular, violence against women and children and the ongoing state of war.

We declare:

- our solidarity with women suffering in situations of conflict and war throughout the world.

« THE CHARTER, THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD »

On December 10, 2004, the World March of Women delegates meeting in Kigali, Rwanda, adopted the Women's Global Charter for Humanity. The result of a long process of consultations, exchanges and discussions with women's groups from some 60 countries, the Charter is based on consensus. It includes the values all the women believe in, without exception: peace, justice, freedom, equality, solidarity. Regardless of their situation in their respective countries, they consider these values of the utmost importance and of equal significance. The Charter is an instrument that will count, many delegates at the Rwanda meeting told us.

"The five values reflected in the Charter are important in my country and in our context," Shashi, from India, commented. Odette, from Rwanda, agreed: "The five values contained in the Charter are crucial for our country. I think they are very interdependent, all those values complement one another."

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Jing, from the Philippines, expressed the same opinion: "All the values are important. In our organization, Kilos Kabaro, there are groups who work on the environment, others on sexual trafficking and still others on food security, access to housing, lesbian rights. So each value is important since we all work on issues of equal importance."

"None of the values can be separated from the others," said Rosa, from Peru. "These values are necessary for the society we want to build and are already building. They are associated with themes that are important for the women of Peru and the women of the world."

"We are very sensitive to the question of violence against women and the fight against poverty, but we also feel for the themes of peace, justice and equity," Souna, from Niger, remarked.

Denouncing violence in the Charter is one of the most important points for Gladys, from Mexico. "From Chiapas to Chihuhua, we have just one watchword: Stop the violence against women, stop the murders," she said. Her definition of violence includes the effects of free trade agreements, which penalize aboriginal populations above all and among them, women.

Ana Isabel, from El Salvador, also sees the Charter as an instrument "to condemn all forms of violence." She added that, due to the lack of jobs, many Salvadoran women and men emigrate, with all the violent consequences this entails, and she considered the Charter an important document in this respect.

Julie, from Québec Native Women, thinks the Charter will support the basic tenets of her association, especially where human rights and freedoms are concerned. "With the Charter, we are taking a step forward," she said, with the proviso that "it is well adapted to aboriginal communities, whose situation is very different from that of Québec women."

"Overall, the Charter represents all the rights we ask for as Lebanese women and Arab women, that is, to fight poverty and discirimination, and sexual trafficking. It also conveys what we wish for and dream about to obtain a world of justice, peace, equality and fraternity," Ghida, from Lebanon, reflected.

For Gabriela, from Romania, the Charter will help strengthen women's presence in positions of decision-making and political responsibilities, especially in her country, where, she said, "Women's rights are respected on paper but not in actual fact."

Some women insisted on the importance of peace: "This is an irreplaceable value for humanity to carry on," said Ruth, from Cameroon. For Emily, from Jordan, peace is essential, particularly in the current context of war in the Middle East. "But," she added, "peace will not be achieved if democracy, freedom, solidarity and justice are not achieved also. These are values we have been fighting for for a long time."

"The Charter contains important values if we want to build a peaceful world," commented Awa, from Burkina Faso, adding, "In our opinion, as long as we don't understand that men and women are equal beings; as long as we don't understand that women must have freedom to take initiative and express themselves, to live and be considered persons; as long as we don't understand that tolerance is the key to everything and that solidarity allows us to go forward, we will not have peace."

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For many women the Charter is important because it was written collectively. "This Charter is our baby, a baby we, the women of the world, conceived together. It is the future of the world—an egalitarian, fairer, better world," Safiétou, from Senegal, said emphatically. She also saw it as an instrument to "make visible the actions of women activists, especially feminist women who have another world view and who today more than ever before reaffirm their worldwide solidarity."

"The Charter is very important because it is our world view and we have built that view with the women of the world," Michèle, from Québec, noted.

"In our country, the Charter will serve as a link with women on other continents, to raise the aspect of international solidarity," Maryam, from Belgium, said. For Eva, from Galicia, "The Charter is important because it presents the viewpoint of all women who suffer oppression and the consequences of patriarchy."

"If it can deepen our solidarity and allow all women to advance a little more and say that we, together with men, want to build another world, then I think December 10 will go down as a history-making day in the feminist movement," Judith, from France, concluded.

Brigitte Verdière, Communications Officer

A PLETHORA OF ACTIONS IN 2005

The 5th International Meeting gave delegates a chance to present the actions women are preparing in their countries. Here are some excerpts of interviews conducted during the meeting:

Americas

On March 20, the Charter will be relayed from Bolivia to Peru, over Lake Titicaca, home to Aymara and Quechua women. "On March 22, at a rally in Lima, we will sew our national quilt square with squares created by women who will be participating in a competition. It will reflect our dreams and hopes and convey the message that we are struggling for a better world," says Rosa. Peruvian women are fighting for a society where there is "peace in the home and on the street; a society that knows no discrimination, where women's bodies and labour are not commodities." When they relay the Charter to Ecuadorian women they will address "women's access to resources and poverty, particularly of rural women, whose productive labour and leadership ability are not recognized."

Women in El Salvador will have the Charter from April 17–20. Women are holding actions on the borders of Honduras and Guatemala; the capital city will be the site of more activities to inform, denounce and mobilize the public. Salvadorian women plan to use the Charter to denounce the impact of free trade agreements (NAFTA, Pueblo-Panama Plan, etc.), for example, immigration and the accompanying violence.

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In Mexico, where women will have the Charter from April 21–27, rallies are scheduled to take place in Chiapas, Mexico City and Chihuahua. Women are preparing meetings, town hall sessions, news conferences and the creation of a national quilt in addition to the square that will be joined to the global quilt. "On October 17, we are also taking part in the 24 hours of solidarity," says Gladys. "For indigenous communities, noon, when the sun is at its highest point, is an important hour." Women will denounce violence, especially the violence committed against young women emigrating to the United States in a context of mounting poverty due to the free trade treaties. "The Charter will be a tool for education, awareness-raising and denunciation of this situation."

"The Charter will be relayed from English-speaking Canada to Québec City along the St. Lawrence River on May 6," says Michèle, of Québec. "It will be received by women belonging to Quebec Native Women and then will be passed hand to hand up parliament hill to the site of Québec's National Assembly. Every region will be represented." Québec women will present five demands to improve women's living and working conditions, each of them linked to one of the values contained in the Charter.

Native women will take the Charter to their communities. "It may not be well received by the band councils, which are often led by men," thinks Julie, a member of Quebec Native Women. "It means we will have to work hard. But there is a lot of solidarity among the women."

Europe

The European rally is scheduled for May 28–29, in Marseille, in the south of France. During these two days women will hold debates and workshops on the different themes of the Charter and on the 17 demands. "We will also have a march, and we're expecting 25,000 to 50,000 people," says Judith. Beginning in March, the French coordinating body will go into schools "to explain the process of drafting the Charter to the children. We'll ask them to make quilt squares and then we'll vote on the square that will be added to the global quilt." Other groups will also be addressed, including civil society, the media, and elected officials. "We'll ask elected officials who are sympathetic to our ideas to present the Charter to their colleagues, and to declare, every time a law or governmental proposal fails to live up to the Charter's standards, 'impossible—women of the world do not agree."

Belgian women will hold relay marches from March 4–14, travelling by barge, bicycle and on foot. "We'll stop in shelters for battered women, police stations, social assistance offices, and refugee centres to raise women's awareness and offer useful information," explains Maryam. "In one region, women will take turns reciting sections of the Charter. In other places, women will use the Charter to draft demands to present to local authorities." Theatrical presentations on violence, marches and a symbolic action at the Grand-place on October 17, are also being planned.

In Galicia, women will present the Charter to political, trade union, and social groups and to NGOs and the local and national governments "so they realize the importance of having a coordinated women's network and integrate the demands of Galician women into their programs," says Eva.

From June 6–8, Romanian women will be relaying the Charter through the country's three regions. We will "discus the importance of the Charter and see how women are fighting for their rights," mentions Gabriela, who sees the Charter as an instrument to reinforce women's political presence.

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Asia

In India women will begin holding workshops on the Charter in March, once the Charter has been translated into the national languages. "I will also be meeting with religious officials," says Shashi, "and I hope to use the Charter to interest them in the women's movement." When the Charter arrives in the third week of July, Indian women will march in Delhi and deliver the Charter to the president of the country "so we can discuss the Charter's content with him and the measures he can take to implement it."

Philippina women will symbolically launch the Charter on March 8 in Manila, during a demonstration they are organizing jointly with other women's groups. On April 22, they will participate in Earth Day, organized by the Earth Day Network. At the end of the relay they will coordinate their activities with those being held for Food Day, on October 15. They will have public meetings on the links between the Charter and existing international agreements. They are also organizing the relay of the Charter between Korea and Laos from July 6–9.

In Lebanon, women from each region will bring a puzzle piece to Martyrs Square, in Beirut. "There, we will put the puzzle pieces together, each of them representing one of the five principles of the Charter. At noon, the churches will ring their bells and the mosques will broadcast the Muslim prayer in a gesture of solidarity from the different religions present in Lebanon. There will also be a news conference. Then, from noon until midnight, in succession, women in all the regions will make noise," explains Reeda. Lebanese women will present the Charter to the political parties, UN delegates to Lebanon and to the international associations. The relay will occur from July 31–August 2.

Jordanian women are receiving it next, from August 3–4. They will invite civil society representatives to Amman, the capital, where there will be an official presentation of the Charter to highlight its importance. They will also submit the Charter to their government "so they take measures to inscribe the values in our national legislation. We must also meet at the regional level to discuss the content of the Charter," says Emily.

Africa

From September 11–17, the Charter will be in the African Great Lakes region. For Odette, from Rwanda, "the Charter will help us to talk publicly about the values contained in it and use them at all levels, from the grassroots to the highest levels in this country, so that our voices and demands are heard," On October 17, women will pay tribute to the most vulnerable groups of women and offer them concrete support.

"We will receive the Charter and march to the national assembly and president's residence, ending with a concert. This will be followed by a caravan to our sisters in Mali; with them we will symbolically baptize our baby, the Charter," explains Safiétou, from Senegal. For her, the Charter is an instrument that "reinforces our lobbying efforts to improve internal legislation and harmonize it with the international instruments that defend women's freedom and greater access to justice." The Charter will be in Senegal from October 8–10.

From September 29–October 3, the Charter will travel to Benin and Niger. "We're planning many cultural, sports and theatrical activities," says Souna, from Niger. "Their aim is to strengthen solidarity

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between women and heighten the visibility of the March in both our countries." In Niger, women will focus on the struggle to end violence against women.

Last, in Burkina Faso, where the Relay of the Charter comes to a close, there will be a march to a site that has yet to be chosen as the final stop of the Relay. "Our idea is for the mayor of Ouagadougou to offer us a site that we will name Place de la paix (Peace Square). If our plan succeeds, we will erect a statue representing women that we will cover with the quilt. We will then raise it and issue a call for peace," explains Awa. Beforehand, women will conduct a "30-day caravan through all the regions. We will have participatory theatre based on the five values of the Charter. This will give a women an opportunity to talk about their concerns."

Brigitte Verdière, Communications Officer, International Secretary

RELAY : FOCAL POINTS

World Relay of the Charter and the Patchwork Quilt (In Chronological Order: Date: Day/Month)

- BRAZIL (08/03 1103)
- BRAZIL / ARGENTINE / URUGUAY (12/03)
- ARGENTINE (13/03 14/03)
- BOLIVIA (15/03 19/03)
- PERU (20/03 24/03)
- ECUADOR (29/03 31/03)
- o COLOMBIA (01/04 03/04)
- TRINIDAD & TOBAGO (04/04 06/04)
- HAITI (07/04 09/04)
- CUBA (10/04 12/04)
- HONDURAS (13/04 16/04)
- EL SALVADOR (17/04 20/04)
- MEXICO (21/04 2604)
- MEXICO/USA (27/04)
- UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (28/04 30/04)
- CANADA (01/05 05/05)

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- QUEBEC (06/05 08/05)
- TURKEY/GREECE (09/05 12/05)
- ITALY (13/05 14/05)
- PORTUGAL (15/05 19/05)
- o GALICIA (20/05 23/05)
- BASQUE COUNTRY (24/05 27/05)
- FRANCE (European action in Marseille) (28/05 29/05)
- o BELGIUM (30/05 31/05)
- NETHERLANDS (01/06 03/06)
- o DENMARK/ SWEDEN (04/06 05/06)
- ROMANIA (06/06 08/06)
- o BULGARIA (09/06 11/06)
- SWITZERLAND (12/06 15/06)
- o CASTILLA/CATALONIA (16/06 19/06)
- NEW CALEDONIA (20/06 24/06)
- AUSTRALIA (25/06 29/06)
- JAPAN (30/06 02/07)
- REPUBLIC OF KOREA (03/07 05/07)
- PHILIPPINES (06/07 09/07)
- DEMOCRATIC POPULAR LAO (10/07 12/07)
- o THAILAND/BURMA (13/07 16/07)
- INDIA (17/07 23/07)
- PAKISTAN (24/07 27/07)
- o AZERBAIJAN (28/07 30/07)
- LEBANON (31/07 02/08)
- JORDAN (03/08 04/08)
- TUNISIA (05/08 07/08)

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- ISRAEL (Jewish and Palestinian women- mujeres Judías y Palestinas) To be confirmed (08/08 - 10/08)
- SUDAN (04/09 06/09)
- \circ UGANDA (07/10 10/10) to be confirmed
- AFRICAN GREAT LAKES (R.D.CONGO/ RWANDA/ BURUNDI) (11/09 17/09)
- MOZAMBIQUE (18/09 21/09)
- SOUTH AFRICA (22/09 24/09)
- CAMEROON (25/09 28/09)
- NIGER/BENIN (29/09 03/10)
- o GUINEA (Conakry) (04/10 07/10)
- SENEGAL (08/10 10/10)
- MALI (11/10 14/10)
- BURKINA FASO (15/10 17/10)

You can see the Map of the relay at the following page : http://www.marchemondiale.org/carte_relais.html

ALLIANCES

VIBRANT PRESENCE OF THE MARCH AT THE 2005 WSF

Women of the World March of Women were a vibrant presence at the 5th World Social Forum, from January 26 to 31, 2005. They presented the **Women's Global Charter for Humanity**, a call for a world built on **equality**, **freedom**, **solidarity**, **justice and peace**.

During the Forum, the World March of Women organized:

- an Assembly to present the 2005 action plan;
- a debate, "Feminism and the Anti-globalization Movement"; and
- a workshop, "Feminism, Peace and Demilitarization."

Numerous women from the countries represented at the Forum participated in these activities. Delgates of the March flowed in from Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Québec, El Salvador, France, Italy, Portugal and Switzerland.

The World March of Women also participated in a myriad of other activities and campaigns organized by other movements and networks, notably the "Feminist Action Laboratory," based in the Youth Camp,

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where it presented analysis and actions to fight sexist violence and the commercialization of women's bodies and lives, and defend the right to abortion.

In all these debates, the March contributes a critical feminist perspective of the world today, denouncing patriarchy and capitalism, which it considers the sources of oppression, domination and exclusion. The March upholds feminist revolution to oppose the forces of sexist globalization.

MARCH : NEW DESIGN

INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS OF THE WMW: RE-DESIGN NECESSARY

Despite unceasing efforts of women at the International Secretariat, we have been unable to obtain the funds needed to maintain the WMW Secretariat in Montreal in 2005. Since November 2004, the five women who were permanent employees have received no remuneration but have continued working to close files, prepare the international meeting in Rwanda and invent means to ensure the successful completion of the 2005 actions.

Decentralization of international responsibilities, which has been underway for several months already, is one of these means. During the meeting, we decided we needed to accelerate the pace. Two countries had already committed to carrying out international coordinating tasks.

- 1- The Brazilian national coordinating body is responsible for launching the Women's Global Charter and the departure of the planetary relay of the Charter and quilt on March 8, 2005, in Sao Paulo.
- 2- The national coordinating body of Burkina Faso is coordinating the entire Relay, from one focal point to the next and one continent to the next, until the international event marking the conclusion of the Relay in Ouagadougou.

We again encourage national coordinating bodies to send (at your expense) a representative to the launch of the Charter on March 8 in Brazil and the arrival of the Charter on October 17 in Burkina Faso.

There is currently no national coordinating body taking responsibility for coordinating the third international action: the 24 Hours of Global Feminist Solidarity on October 17. With respect to the international collectives and working groups, the countries who were already responsible for them, some of them jointly with the International Secretariat, agreed to continue the work they had begun.

The International Committee will meet in Burkina Faso in October 2005 and is ready to collectively address any problems that may arise.

Diane Matte, the coordinator, will maintain the function of international representative and spokeswoman of the WMW, on an activist basis.

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As for the International Secretariat itself, we decided that at least two full-time staff would be necessary to ensure its regular operations, and that they could be based anywhere. Diane Matte, March coordinator, and Nancy Burrows, who is responsible for internal communications, were conducting last ditch fundraising efforts with the Canadian and Quebec governments to pay for these positions. They are doing so on a volunteer basis.

In addition, Brigitte Verdière, responsible for external communications/Web site/drafting the Charter, is currently employed by the WMW in Peru, thanks to the support of a Canadian group, CUSO, and will continue working until the project concludes at the end of March.

If possible, we will maintain the post now held by Nancy Burrows in the form of a Québec-Brazil knowledge transfer project, with monies available from projects currently being considered.

It was also decided that each national coordinating body should support the operations of the International Secretariat by contributing a minimum of US\$200 (some groups will finance their contribution through a percentage of sales of promotional materials; others will ask for a contribution from participating groups; others will include it in their funding requests, etc.). The Committee's members were reelected.

The plan we present here is an emergency or transition plan to enable us to meet the goals we have set for 2005. During this period we must begin formulating a strategic plan to guarantee the survival of the WMW. The coordinating body in Senegal is willing to work on this in partnership with the International Committee. The Peruvian coordinating body has offered to organize the next international meeting in June 2006. There, we will evaluate the 2005 actions and determine our next actions.

Nadia DeMond, European representative to the International Committee of the WMW

Collaborators

Thanks to all the women who collaborated on this issue of the Newsletter: Marie-France Benoit (March, Quebec), Élise Boyer (French-English translation), Nancy Burrows (International Secretariat), Luisa Durante (International Secretariat), Nicole Kennedy (French-English translation), Diane Matte (International Secretariat), Miriam Nobre (March, Brazil), Magaly Sala-Skup (French-Spanish translation), Brigitte Verdière (International Secretariat), and to all women who support us.

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