



IWC International Event: Promoting Inclusive Peacemaking

The International Women's Commission (IWC) for a Just and Sustainable Palestinian-Israeli Peace is convening an international event in Jerusalem on May 13-14, 2007 entitled: *A Place at the Table: Women and the Resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*. The event will bring together prominent Palestinian, Israeli and international members of IWC, along with representatives of civil society organizations, political activists and members of the wider Palestinian and Israeli publics. This high-profile meeting will serve as a platform for increasing visibility for the IWC agenda at both the grassroots level as well as political leadership in Israel and Palestine. It will also mark 40 years of occupation, during which time women have not had a meaningful role to play in resolving the conflict.

The IWC charter is committed to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Within the context of seeking a peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the IWC is interested in focusing its May event on formulating ways to increase the involvement not only of women, but also of civil society in current peacemaking efforts. Indeed, experience in conflict regions around the world has shown that public participation in the forging of peace agreements can be a key factor in their success. The IWC is therefore recommending the establishment of a consultative mechanism that would allow civil society in general, and women in particular, to give substantive input to the peace process on a regular basis. Fostering increased transparency and inclusion, this innovation can lead to greater support for the process and the subsequent expansion of the political base of the respective Palestinian and Israeli leaders.

The proposed international event will provide an opportunity for the discussion of these ideas among local and international women leaders and activists, as well as the precise contribution that the IWC can make to the process. The deliberations will demonstrate the added value of the IWC as a coalition with unique linkage capacity that can play a pivotal role in reviving a workable, meaningful and inclusive negotiating process leading, ultimately, to reconciliation. While rooted in local civil society, Palestinian and Israeli IWC members reach into decision-making circles. The involvement of prominent international women ensures strong connections and leveraging power with international leaders and bodies.

The two-day event will include internal meetings of the IWC membership, a larger public conference session with over 100 local invitees followed by a press conference, reception with local diplomatic representatives, and a tour of the Separation Wall. A position paper outlining the principles of IWC and recommendations to the political leadership will be presented and publicized with the aim of reaching Palestinian and Israeli publics and decision-makers. In addition, Noeleen Heyzer, IWC Chair and Executive Director of UNIFEM, has requested meetings between an IWC delegation and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Tzipi Livni.

The Jerusalem event represents an important opportunity to build greater public awareness and support for the IWC agenda and achieve concrete results towards facilitating the increased representation of women in Palestinian-Israeli peacemaking in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.