

Advancing Women's Leadership for Sustainable Peace in the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict and Worldwide

*A Colloquium supported by the Government of Spain during its Presidency of the EU
Co-sponsored with UNIFEM and the International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Palestinian-Israeli Peace (IWC)*

Spanish Senate, Madrid, Spain

1-2 June 2010

Aide Memoire

I. Introduction

The gender dimensions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and possible solutions have gone largely unrecognized. Women's voices, and the perspectives of individuals and organizations committed to the human rights of women and gender equality, are absent or grossly underrepresented in formal mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict despite the guarantees of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the recently adopted Resolution 1889 (October 2009), as well as decrees and laws recognizing Resolution 1325 by both Palestinian and Israeli officials. The critical role that women committed to a just and sustainable two-state solution could play in this process cannot be overstated; the solidarity among women across the lines of conflict offers inspiration and hope for their societies as a whole and generates added value to the resolution of conflict. In a context of deepening tensions between communities and pervasive despair, Israeli, Palestinian and international women leaders continue to come together to find common understanding and to develop a strategic plan for reaching a just and sustainable resolution.

The EU's commitment to the implementation of Resolution 1325 has been strengthened by its consistent engagement with the UN and efforts to buttress Resolution 1325 with resolutions in the European Parliament, highlighted by the EU Presidency Statement on the 5th Anniversary of Resolution 1325 and EP resolutions on women and conflict resolution and peace-building (2000/2025 INI; 2005/2215 INI; 2008/2198INI).

II. The International Women's Commission (IWC)

The International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Palestinian-Israeli Peace (IWC) was formed in 2005 under the auspices of UNIFEM in an effort to strengthen implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which calls *i.a.* for increased representation of women at all levels of decision-making in the resolution of conflict. The IWC is an equal partnership involving not only Israelis and Palestinians but also prominent international women leaders with extensive experience in diplomacy, political negotiation and grassroots organizing. The IWC has succeeded in uniting women living different realities on both sides of the conflict, and those living outside the region, to speak out on the most difficult political issues in one voice. As such, it is a model for the implementation of Resolution 1325.

The UNIFEM Executive Director, Ines Alberdi, serves as IWC chair. Composed of approximately 20 Israeli, 20 Palestinian, and 20 International women leaders, the IWC comprises members of parliament, present and former ministers from different political streams and civil society leaders, many of whom have been engaged in numerous efforts to promote Israeli-Palestinian dialogue for many years. Membership also includes a distinguished list of honorary members including President Halonen of Finland, President Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia, Secretary of the Socialist Party Organization and Member of Spain's Senate, Leire Pajín Iraola, as well as prominent figures such as Gloria Steinem, writer and activist, and Jody Williams, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and founding coordinator of the international campaign to ban landmines.

Since its founding, the IWC has stressed the goal of bringing an end to the Israeli occupation through immediate final status negotiations, leading to a viable sovereign Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel on 4 June 1967 borders. It has aligned its calls with those of other leading groups advocating for a peaceful resolution, including the Arab League Initiative. The IWC has placed an emphasis on the need to hold all parties accountable for fulfilling their obligations under international humanitarian and international human rights law, and including the obligation under Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1889 to include women in negotiations and to promote and protect women's human rights in all phases of the conflict. Speaking in one voice, Israeli, Palestinian and international members of the IWC appeal to the international community to support the following:

- The importance of addressing the roots of the conflict in order to attain a durable peace.
- The need to ensure compliance with international law and international humanitarian law.
- The active engagement of a third party capable of providing mediation, arbitration and accountability; such engagement could provide UN oversight and legal responsibility to ensure the ending of the Israeli occupation and to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self determination.
- The formal recognition of the Palestinian state on June 4, 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.
- The adoption of a regional perspective including the Arab Peace Initiative to bring about a workable and comprehensive solution.
- The employment of all necessary measures, including precise monitoring and verification systems as well as introducing international forces to ensure compliance.
- The adoption of a gender perspective and the assurance of women's participation and the perspectives of women's rights advocates at every step.

III. IWC High Level Colloquium in Madrid, Spain, June 2010

With the support of the Government of Spain and in commemoration of the 10th anniversary year of Resolution 1325 and the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, UNIFEM and the IWC will convene a two-day high level colloquium in the Spanish Senate on Women's Leadership in Resolving the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict with a focus on the policy proposals of the International Women's Commission. The purpose of this two-day event is to:

- promote awareness and dialogue about the innovative approach of the IWC to building a shared vision of a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on principles of international law, addressing the asymmetries between parties and peoples, reframing issues in terms of the roots of conflict, the active involvement of the international community, and a restructuring of the peace process;
- gain support and forge alliances with the EU to promote women's leadership and participation in processes to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in accordance with UNSCR 1325 and 1889;
- engage leaders and the Spanish public with the IWC's political analysis, update on developments on the ground, and the challenges of working across conflict lines as a body of prominent Israeli, Palestinian and international leaders speaking in one voice; and
- provide an opportunity for existing and new members of the IWC to deepen their shared vision.

The International Women's Commission appreciates the longstanding financial support of the Government of Spain and the involvement of key members including IWC's Chair, UNIFEM's Executive Director, Ines Alberdi and IWC Honorary Member, Leire Pajin Iraola. The partnership between the Government of Spain and UNIFEM provides an opportunity to highlight the often overlooked dimension of women's leadership in the resolution of conflict. This is particularly relevant at the 10th anniversary year of UNSCR 1325, a new U.S. administration affirming its commitment to reaching an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement, and the changing EU political landscape including the Spanish Presidency of the Council. Given that the EU, the U.S. and the UN are three of the four key members of the "Quartet", this convening is a strategic step in elevating the visibility of women's perspectives in formal peace processes.

IV. Participants and Tentative Agenda

Approximately 60 – 80 participants would be expected at the two-day colloquium. On the first day of the colloquium, experts would provide an overview on Women and Conflict Prevention and Peace-building, situating the work of the IWC within global initiatives to advance UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions. IWC representatives would highlight the implementation of 1325 in the context of the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; a different approach to negotiations from a gendered perspective; the impact of asymmetries within the conflict and approaches to addressing them; and IWC's prescription for accountability in the implementation of international law and international humanitarian law.

In the afternoon and evening of the second day, a public meeting would be held to which selected civil society organizations, individuals and the media would be invited.