

PRESS RELEASE

Women Peacemakers Program Joins the 2015 Women's Walk for Peace in Korea

THE HAGUE, THE NETHERLANDS - On International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament – May 24, the Women Peacemakers Program (WPP), based in The Hague, The Netherlands, joins the 2015 Women's Walk for Peace in Korea, initiated by Women Cross DMZ. Thirty international women peacemakers from around the world, including Netsai Mushonga, WPP's International Advisory Council Member, and Nobel Laureates Mairead Maguire and Leymah Gbowee, will join Korean women, north and south, to call for an end to the Korean War and for a new beginning for a reunified Korea. On May 24, they will cross the De-Militarized Zone (DMZ), which has been separating Korean families for over 70 years, as a symbolic act of peace.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament (May 24). Women have often been at the forefront of peace and disarmament initiatives, but this rarely gets the attention and focus it deserves. To highlight women's important contributions to peace, WPP has been celebrating historic and current efforts of women for peacebuilding and disarmament on this important day. The message of the worldwide anniversary celebration is simple: "We refuse violence as a solution to the world's challenges. We are working for a just and peaceful world, one that meets human needs, not military ones."

2015 is an important year for the Women, Peace and Security agenda, with the 15th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the first ever "Women, Peace & Security" Resolution, and the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, setting out the international agenda for achieving gender equality. For Korea, it also marks 70 years since Korea's division into two separate states by Cold War powers, which precipitated the 1950-53 Korean War. For 70 years, North and South Korea have been at a state of war, leading to much suffering in both countries.

Building upon women's dedication and work for peace and disarmament, Women Cross DMZ is organizing the 2015 Women Walk for Peace in Korea on International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament, and invited WPP to join. The Women's Walk aims to draw global attention to the urgent need to end the Korean War by replacing the ceasefire with a peace treaty, to help reunite families separated by the DMZ, and to ensure women's involvement at all levels of the peacebuilding process. The Walk has been approved by both the North and South Korean government, and will be accompanied by Peace Symposiums taking place in Pyongyang and Seoul.



Members of the international delegation, Christine Ahn, Netsai Mushonga, Mairead Maguire, Vana Kim Hansen, Leymah Gbowee, Abigail Disney, Suzuyo Takazato and Chung Hyun Kyung at a Press Conference in Beijing, China (May 19, 2015)

"The International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament is a day set aside for women to raise their voices in support of peace and reduction of arms production and sale. I volunteered to embark on this trip and have no doubt whatsoever on its importance and impact. It is my strong conviction that we are doing the right thing; being in solidarity with our fellow Korean women, engaging governments of Korea and reminding them and the rest of a world that a peace treaty is needed." – Netsai Mushonga, WPP International Advisory Council Member and joining the Women's Walk for Peace in Korea Delegation

Isabelle Geuskens, WPP Executive Director, is among the over 80 endorses of the 2015 Women's Walk for Peace in Korea, joining, amongst others, the Dalai Lama and Nobel Laureates Jody Williams, Shirin Ebadi, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

"In a world where we are bombarded on a daily basis with news about war and human rights abuses, one easily loses hope. However, the important stories that often remain untold are the stories of ordinary people - often women - who choose to make a difference, because conscience asks them to no longer remain silent. History has shown us that it is during these moments that transformation takes place. Celebrating May 24 is all about celebrating those brave women and their acts and messages of hope and peace." – Isabelle Geuskens, WPP Executive Director

For more information about WPP's participation in the 2015 Women's Walk for Peace in Korea, as well as interview requests, please contact WPP directly via sophie@womenpeacemakersprogram.org

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Women Peacemakers Program

The Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) has been established in 1997 to support and empower women peace activists. WPP actively advocates for the recognition of women's experiences and peacebuilding contributions during war and conflict and the integration of a gender perspective in peacebuilding processes. The Women Peacemakers Program's vision is of a world where women and men work together as allies to build communities where people co-exist peacefully through active nonviolence. Its mission is to support the empowerment of gender-sensitive women and men for the transformation of conflict through active nonviolence.



For more than 20 years, WPP, together with its network partners, has been celebrating women's leadership and participation in peace processes on International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament - May 24. Over the years, May 24 activities have taken place all over the world, ranging from public panel discussions, publications and film screenings to community theatre and peace marches. www.womenpeacemakersprogram.org

Women Cross DMZ

Women Cross DMZ is spearheading the 2015 International Women's Walk for Peace in Korea. The initiative was founded by Christine Ahn, and is co-charied by Gloria Steinem and Mairead Maguire. On May 24, 2015, 30 international women peacemakers from around the world will walk with Korean women, north and south, to call for an end to the Korean War and for a new beginning for a reunified Korea. International peace symposiums will be held in Pyongyang and Seoul where there is the opportunity to listen to Korean women and share experiences and ideas of mobilizing women to bring an end to violent conflict. The hope is to cross the 2-mile wide De-Militarized Zone (DMZ) that separates millions of Korean families as a symbolic act of peace. www.womencrossdmz.org

