Environment Working Group Report May 2016

Edel Havin Beukes and Lorraine Mirham are the current co-convenors of the Environment Working Group (EWG).

Centenary Congress and Women Stop War Conference, The Hague April 2015

Straight after our last IB meeting, at our Centenary Congress, we held in partnership with International Peace Bureau (IPB), a seminar at our Women Stop War Conference. The focus of the seminar was ‘Militarism and Environment’.

We outlined the reckless exploitation and unsustainable consumption of natural resources degrades the biosphere and how this worsens climate change. This session explored how militarism and the military industrial complex, sustained by corporate, political and special interests, contribute. We discussed how international dependence on production, research and development of weapons and other military requirements exacerbates war and inequality worldwide. We addressed ecological, societal and political dimensions and considered human security needs and the measures, remedies and action required. We reflected on how to get peace and disarmament into the UN Post 2015 Development Agenda.

Our speakers were; Eva Fidjestøl (WILPF) ‘The pollution and threat to human health and the environment from the civilian and the military industry - The toxic remnants from the nuclear industry.’ Ingeborg Breines (IPB and WILPF) ‘Militarism and Environment – A Climate for Peace’. Margrethe Kvam Tingstad (WILPF) - Militarism and Food Security. Edel Havin Beukes (WILPF) - The Military Industrial Complex - Natural Resources and Mining, Sandy Greenberg (IPB) with a paper by Tamara Lorincz (IPB) - Exemptions and Secrecy; How the Military gets away with Harming the Climate

Above: Conference participants, including many WILPF members, shared ideas for focus and action.

A second seminar, a co-operation between WILPF US, Norway, India and The Netherlands Sections, on Human Rights to Food explored issues around food producers and chemical companies, land grabbing and commercial agriculture, such as cultivation of maize for biodiesel purposes, weapon conflicts and migration.

At a short meeting of the Environment Working Group (EWG), after the Conference, it was agreed that a mapping exercise be carried out to establish expertise, initiatives and contacts in Sections. A questionnaire was drawn up with the help of several members and staff and this was circulated and collated in July/August 2015. It was to help the EWG to scope a project proposal to follow up the decision made at Congress to establish a WILPF Environment programme. The work is ongoing and the survey results inform the process. A
staff member was allocated to support the work and an Intern has been assisting. Funding is still required to enable the establishment of a programme but the ground work is underway to refine the mandate.

**EWG E-News**

We have continued to send out occasional e-newsletters to share information specifically about WILPF Sections’ work on environmental issues. This currently goes to 76 people. We reported, in the October 2015 e-news, the results of the survey of Sections. In January 2016 we reported on WILPF’s participation at the Paris Climate meeting (COP21).

WILPF members from France, Germany, Italy, US, Norway, and Australia ran several workshops in Paris using WILPF analysis of the root causes of violence and war. WILPF members know that it is not just a technical problem to reduce emissions and lower the ecological footprint. Our strategy for a transformative and peaceful society questions the capitalist economic system and defines the alternative.

![WILPF delegation at one of the workshops on women, climate change and militarism](Photo: COP 21 delegation)

Also in January, we reported work of the US Section’s [CLIMATEJUSTICE+WOMEN+PEACE](#) campaign and the completion of two infographics which emphasise how climate justice, women and peace are interconnected. They say that what is needed to meet the climate, economic, social, and ecological emergency we face today is “…not more of the same or tinkering around the edges but real "system change" to create sustainable solutions.” In short, it looks at:

- Global warming and climate change are being “fuelled” by the U.S. and global political, financial, and corporate elite – the 1% – that put profits ahead of human rights, the rights of nature, the common good and the rights of small businesses, peasant farmers, and local economies.

- The corporate capitalist system that prioritizes profits over people and the planet results in environmental degradation and ecological collapse, and creates resource conflicts, water and food shortages, and extreme weather events – all of which impact women disproportionately and lead to human rights abuses, conflict, militarism and refugee crises.

- Trade Agreements are the tool transnational corporations use to challenge and erode national sovereignty, democracy and community rights. The new trifecta of trade agreements – the Trans Pacific Partnership (TTP), Transatlantic Trade and Investment Agreement (TTIP) and the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) - are the next stage of global corporate rule by “free” trade agreement
“Listen to Women for A Change” calls for:

- Human Rights made central to all initiatives for climate, food security and conflict resolution.
- Women and All Stakeholders as Equal Partners at all climate and peace talks.
- Indigenous People and Tribal Nations have their rights and the rights of Mother Earth recognized
- Non-Violent Conflict Resolution

Recent Work and Sections

We have been working with the Secretariat and members to identify how we can ensure that environment and militarism, is discussed using a WILPF analysis at the upcoming International Peace Bureau Congress in the autumn in Berlin. Suggestions so far include promoting WILPF key note speakers, partnering on panels on topics where we have expertise and suggestions for workshops including; Militarism, human security and environment, Mining and natural resources, Climate, refugees, migration and militarism.

We still have a lot to do regarding getting a WILPF environment programme established and this relies on support from EWG members. We hope we can attract more of you this coming year. We invite anyone who wishes to support the strategic direction of this work. The EWG aims to collate and share the work of Sections on environmental themes and to seek opportunities for WILPF to promote its analysis. So, the research and work is carried out by Sections. If you are interested in joining the EWG, please get in touch.

Alternatively, you could join the growing number of people who have signed up to receive our EWG e-news. As usual we will aim to share as much of our Sections’ work as possible. We do need Sections to help by engaging with this work. We aspire to being more active concentrating on the effects of militarism on the biosphere.

Edel Havin Beukes and Lorraine Mirham
May 2016