

*L'AFEM a contribué à l'événement ci-après et apporté son soutien à sa Déclaration finale, étant représentée par sa Vice-présidente Sophie Dimitroulias, qui y a présenté une communication, en sa qualité de membre du Bureau de la Conférence des OING du Conseil de l'Europe :*

*ci-après : Déclaration finale et rapport par Annelise Oeschger Présidente d'honneur de la Conférence des OING du Conseil de l'Europe*

**Conference**

**The Union of Soldiers Mothers Committees (Russia)  
with the support of the INGO Conference of the Council of Europe**

**GENDER EQUALITY -  
NECESSARY BASIS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL PARTICIPATION.**

**PUBLIC EXPERIENCE OF SOLDIERS MOTHERS**

**Moscow, 18 May 2009**

## DECLARATION

We, participants to the Conference on *Gender Equality – Necessary basis for the development of civil participation. Public experience of soldiers' mothers*, held in Moscow on 18 May 2009 state with regret and concern that the issues of translating into reality the gender equality principles and promoting women's civil participation in shaping most important directions of the country's development are not among the top priorities of the government policies and are pushed outside the attention of the government and the society.

The entire range of complicated issues facing the country - a deteriorating demographic and socio-economic situation, corruption in the public administration, the many unresolved and increasingly acute problems of providing social security - can be addressed only with an active participation of women majority in the decision-making process which will determine Russia's future.

The Conference participants emphasize that gender equality in all domains is a fundamental human right and a basic condition for democratic development. In this connection, the Conference participants express their support to the Madrid Declaration "Making gender equality a reality" adopted on 12 May 2009 by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Women are ready to bear, on an equal basis with men, responsibility for utilization of Russia's richest resources in the interest of peace, modernization and enhancing the standard of living of the population.

The existing situation cannot but create concern and anxiety.

The crisis in making the principles of gender equality a reality may lead to an increased social polarization, a higher social tension; it may aggravate the entire range of internal political issues and finally, render irreversible the ramifications of the demographic catastrophe which is exacerbated by a policy of denial of equality between men and women.

The Conference participants have to state that as a result of the government's disregard of the gender equality principles, the few women in the power structures often endorse resolutions undermining these principles.

The Conference participants urge all women's organizations in Russia to support their call for expanding women's civil participation in making gender equality principles a reality, creating a framework of cooperation and mutual support in order to promote women's participation in political decision making and in human rights protection.

The Conference participants note the positive experience and role of the Soldiers Mothers organizations in promoting this process and support their efforts aimed at implementing the military reform on the basis of democratization and renunciation of the remains of the draft serfdom.

The Conference participants demand the state authority to relinquish the policy of disregarding the interests of the women's majority and to unconditionally honor all international commitments of Russia in guarantying and promoting gender equality, including the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW 1979), the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000) and the Council of Europe Resolution on the Roles of Women and Men in Conflict Prevention, Peace Building and Post-conflict Democratic Processes (2003), providing for a more active participation of women at all decision-making levels in the framework of national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for prevention, regulation and resolution of conflicts and other security issues.

The Conference participants are convinced that movement towards achieving international standards in gender equality will require efficient implementation of the entire range of appropriate international and national legislative and executive tools and mechanisms. In view of this, they insist on a speedy ratification of the CEDAW Optional Protocol (1999) and of Protocol 12 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, securing equality between men and women in all spheres of public life.

The state should promote creation and development of the framework of efficient mechanisms ensuring true civil participation of women in taking fateful-for-Russia decisions and enabling to use de-facto the potentialities of public oversight in this area.

Adopting a federal law of gender equality, creating a committee for women's affairs under the President of the Russian Federation and consistent promotion of women's public

organizations could help the country get out of the deadlock situation in addressing gender issues.

The Conference participants urge international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to provide support and assistance to women's and other public organizations of Russia interested in promoting gender equality principles, measures and politics.

The system of gender inequality that exists in Russia deprives the country of any prospects for development. This is the way to arbitrariness and violence.

Women! Resist attempts to completely turn us into an oppressed and right less majority!

Follow the example of Soldiers Mothers!

Women can and should, on an equal basis with men, lead the country to prosperity, protect their children and our common future! Do not surrender to civil despair and apathy!  
Down with gender inequality!

## **GENDER EQUALITY - NECESSARY BASIS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL PARTICIPATION. PUBLIC EXPERIENCE OF SOLDIERS MOTHERS.**

**Organized by the Union of Soldiers Mothers Committees (Russia),  
with the support of the INGO Conference of the Council of Europe.**

### Date and venue

18 May 2009. Premises of the International Federation for Peace and Conciliation, Prospekt Mira 36, Moscow.

### Participants

Over 40 persons - mainly members from Regional Soldiers Mothers Committees; members of other NGOs, scientists, journalists.

### Framework

Follow up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regional NGO Congress of the INGO Conference of the Council of Europe in Penza/Russia. Activity in the framework of the 3 years cooperation program of the INGO Conference of the Council of Europe and the Council of the President of the Russian Federation on Assistance to the Development of Civil Society Institutions and Human Rights "Strengthening Civil Society and Civil Participation in the Russian Federation".

### Overall aim

Promoting the issue of women becoming and being recognized as relevant actors by both authorities and society in Russia.

### Basic instruments guiding the conference

- Council of Europe Resolution MEG-5 (2003) on the Roles of Women and Men in Conflict Prevention, Peace Building and Post-conflict Democratic Processes which considers "continuing to marginalise women in these areas is a waste of resources, skills and competence and minimizes the chances for successful conflict prevention, peace-building and post-conflict democratic processes" and emphasises the need of the full participation of women at all decision making levels and the integration of a gender perspective in all activities.
- Declaration "Making gender equality a reality" adopted on 12 May 2009 by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.
- Draft Code of Good Practices for Civil Participation prepared by the INGO Conference of the Council of Europe.

- UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/1325 on Women, Peace and Security (it was passed unanimously on 31 October 2000 and is the first resolution ever passed by the Security Council that specifically addresses the impact of war on women, and women's contributions to conflict resolution and sustainable peace.)

### 3 topics

1. Putting the gender equality principles into practice. Accumulation of experiences and diversification of activities.
2. Role of soldiers mothers NGOs in human rights protection. Broadening the possibilities to use gender equality principles in order to influence decision making processes in areas of conflict prevention, peace-building and post-conflict democratic processes.
- 3. The problems of international involvement in advancing gender equality principles for human rights protection : by Catherine Sophie Dimitroulias member of the Board of the INGO Conference of the Council of Europe**

### Outcomes:

See the very comprehensive final declaration (attached).

### Some points of the discussion

- Soldiers Mothers (some 7000 active members) presented their three principles of action which they see as the key to their success in promoting human rights in Russia:
  - . non-violence
  - . responsibility for individuals who's rights are violated
  - . cooperation with authorities on individual issues and on general legal and political matters.
- Being so competent, efficient and popular, Soldiers Mothers Committees in the regions face the problem that very often they are seen by both, concerned families and authorities, as the only body being able to resolve the concrete issues - human rights violations in the army as well as questions of pensions, health care etc. Thus, they would deserve consistent financial support from the State. Step by step, such substitution should be overcome and the competent authorities should take their responsibilities.
- Gender Equality is not yet an issue taken seriously or even understood in Russian society. Most women never considered themselves as equal – and many do even not realise this. Women are on average better educated than men but do not know their rights nor think about their situation. Thus, discrimination of women is not a real issue on the political agenda. Most political processes, and all in security matters, are led by men - by a very little number of men, the so called elite which is self-reproducing and isolated from the rest of society. The authority of power and male chauvinism should be replaced by the authority

of law and by the enlightenment of women and men about the fact that gender equality is the main way to a non-violent, prosper society. When talking about Russia's strength, gender equality should become one of the main criteria.

- As in many countries, in Russia authorities are helpless in facing social issues as well as security (in a large sense) issues, and even more in time of crises. Thus, the public councils existing or to be created in ministries on regional and national level should be made up of competent and independent persons, at least 30 % of them being women. They would contribute to the modernisation of the country, which is not only about economics but also about social issues, education, communication, security including the problem of extremism and racism. Women's organisations have already made a lot of analysis and proposals concerning such issues but they have not been taken into account by the competent bodies; this signifies an enormous direct and indirect waste of human and economic resources.

- In Russia there is a lack of solidarity among NGOs, mainly due to conflicts about ideas and ideologies, to competition for funds and to the ambition of some NGOs to become a leader. New formats are needed for cooperation on the basis of a well identified common ground with independence of each participating NGO, like open councils and networks where all have the say and with a huge multiplication effect.

- A draft law on gender equality exists; there were two readings but no voting because it would not have been voted yet. But participants are convinced that such law will be adopted sooner or later. At this stage, a special body under the President or the Prime Minister is needed as well as a clear statement by them about gender equality being a State's top-priority.

#### Personal impression

It was an ambiance of intense, competent and committed work in a spirit of constructive and even serene fight for gender equality in the best interest of Russia.

**Annelise Oeschger Présidente d'honneur de la Conférence des OING du Conseil de l'Europe**