

**Initiative Committee, Caracas, 8 March 2008**

**Basic principles for preparing and conducting the World Women's Conference (WWC) in 2011 in Venezuela**

The experiences made in the past century by the women's movement of the world confirm the conviction that women must take the struggle for their liberation into their own hands. That makes special forms of organization for women necessary which are able to link their struggle to the social, trade union and political organizations and movements.

The initiators from Venezuela (the rank-and-file women's movement "Ana Soto"), Ecuador (Ecuadorian Women's League for Change – CONFEMEC), Argentina and Germany (Women's Political Counsel), which developed the idea of the World Women's Conference, are already being supported by women's organizations and initiatives from 20 countries on four continents. The initiators have addressed the government as well as women's organizations and official bodies of the Venezuelan state with the idea of a World Women's Conference in 2011 in Venezuela, not least out of solidarity with the awakening of the Venezuelan people. The initiative committee is very pleased about the great support and the enthusiasm which was expressed in an extensive consultation with Maria León, former chairwoman of the National Women's Institute Inamujer and today head of the Women's Ministry of Venezuela. It is also pleased about the support of the Standing Commission for Women, Families and Youth of the National Assembly as well as numerous activists of various women's organizations and parts of the mass media of Venezuela.

The numerous and diverse offers of cooperation for preparing and conducting the World Women's Conference in 2011 document the possibility of a great political and logistical support, as well as the security of the conference while, at the same time, the self-reliance, independence, as well as the autonomy of the international preparatory committee are maintained. Both strengthen our basic conviction that we women must take the future into our own hands and thereby stand on our own two feet!

It is the nature of the women's movement that its social composition, its forms of organization and its political tendencies are very broad and diverse. The World Women's Conference must therefore be organized and work with great respect, so that we can include women from all countries and from all progressive, democratic and equal-rights tendencies in the women's movement and make their participation possible. The creativity and the abilities of women in building up alliances are great. This must be made use of to insure a great success of the conference.

At the same time, every country also has a different history and characteristic women's movement, which must be respected in order that it can develop.

In this spirit the following basic principles are applied to the World Women's Conference of rank-and-file women:

1. The conference will be prepared and conducted in an **international process of discussion and organization** by all organizers and participants on the basis of equal rights, without any form of discrimination and above party lines.
2. The conference adopts decisions/resolutions according to the **principle of consensus** and publishes them on this basis. All meetings sum up their most important results and points of view, including contrary positions, as well as proposals for common activities. In this way confrontation and crucial votes, which can lead to division in the conference, can be avoided.

3. The conference rests on two pillars<sup>1</sup>, two elementary event components:
 

**Firstly, the General Assembly**, in which representatives of the rank-and-file women in the respective countries, as well as women living in exile and migrants, are represented according to a certain agreed upon scheme (in accordance with democratic criteria, for example, in relation to the percentage of the population in the country). The women's movement in each single country must find ways to come to an understanding about these representatives in accordance with the particular characteristics of the movement, customs and peculiarities and the mechanisms of reaching consensus in the respective country. The general assembly insures the participation of women from all countries in the discussion and in all points of the program on an equal basis. They discuss key topics of the world situation and women's struggles, adopt decisions/resolutions, as well as sum up their results on the principle of consensus and publish them.

**Secondly, the massive and open participation** of individuals, initiatives and organizations that prepare, carry out or participate in diverse events, workshops, cultural contributions and further activities within the given time and spatial possibilities, provided that they respect the call and the basic principles of the conference.
4. The conference is open to all women and makes special efforts to have girls participate. Fascists<sup>2</sup>, as well as representatives of aggressive organizations and behavior which are hostile to women, are excluded from the conference.
5. Each and every women and organization makes efforts to mobilize their international contacts and friendships for the conference and to take over **responsibility together** for the conference.
6. The conference **finances itself independently** through diverse initiatives and activities and gratefully accepts donations that are given without reservations and conditions. The conference self-reliantly organizes a **service to ensure the security** of the participants and the events.
7. The conference realizes a **democratic culture of debate**.
8. The women's movement in each individual country must principally organize and finance **its work, trip, accommodations and translation** itself. The international preparatory committee sets up a fund to support the participation of delegations from the poorest countries in solidarity and promotes international sponsorship.
9. **Men** are invited to participate as long as they support the rights and the liberation of women, they do not dominate and they actively support the organization of the conference.
10. At the end, the participants can consider about conducting a **further World Women's Conference** and, if so, determine a **preparatory committee**.

<sup>1</sup> Point 3 of the principles was only supported by the initiators from Ecuador, Venezuela and Germany.

<sup>2</sup> It was suggested, but there was no consensus, that religious fanatics should also be excluded from participation.