

***Women's International League for Peace and Freedom***  
***Ligue internationale des femmes pour la paix et la liberté***  
***Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad***  
***Internationale Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit***

**Consultative Status with United Nations ECOSOC, UNCTAD and UNESCO**

**Special Consultative Relations with FAO, ILO and UNICEF**

International Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland  
Australian Section Office, Adelaide  
PO Box 345, Rundle Mall, 5000  
(08) 8232 6334 Email: wilpfaustralia@wilpf.org.au



12 February 2008

Hon Tanya Plibersek MP  
Minister for Housing, Minister for the Status of Women  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister

On behalf of the Australian Section of our organisation, we write to congratulate you on your appointment under the new Rudd Labor Government to head up two portfolios critical for the wellbeing of Australian women.

Additionally, we thank you for your letter of 19 December 2007 in which you stated your intent to work closely with all members of the National Women's Secretariats; to share views and to ensure women's voices are strong and influential. Given the scarcity of inclusive consultations in recent years, we welcome the opportunity to again be part of such deliberations, and Ruth Russell, one of our national coordinators, is looking forward to meeting you next month at the WomenSpeak face-to-face meeting in Canberra.

Founded in 1915, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) empowers women to work effectively for peace and justice in 37 countries around the world. WILPF is aware that war lays bare the gender dynamics of a society, in particular the inequalities facing women and girls. It is now readily acknowledged that women and girls pay an especially heavy toll in armed conflict. Less well known has been the vital role that women play in peace-building and conflict resolution. During conflict and reconstruction, the needs and capacities of women and girls are often overlooked even though they are so vital to peace-building and reconstruction efforts.

As part of our international program, WILPF worked with other NGOs to bring this issue to the United Nations Security Council, where on 31 October 2000, [Resolution 1325](#) (2000) on women, peace and security was unanimously adopted. The adoption of this historic resolution was a major step towards recognising women's role in conflict management, peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building. The Resolution urges Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict. It also calls on all actors involved in negotiating and implementing peace agreements to adopt a

gender perspective that would take into account the special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction.

Despite official "Australia strongly reaffirms commitment to principles of 1325" statements to the UN Security Council in October 2003 and again in October 2004, progress with implementing SCR1325 in/by Australia has been slow. Apart from supporting post-conflict peace-building programs in the Solomon Islands and Bougainville, there was little interest shown by the Howard Government to the call of SCR 1325. Notwithstanding this, WILPF Australian Section has been active in promoting the concept of SCR 1325. With a small grant from the then Office of the Status of Women through the WomenSpeak Network, we developed a dedicated UNSCR 1325 website ([1325australia.org.au](http://1325australia.org.au)). You may recall the launch at Parliament House on 1 December 2004 where you joined Senators Lyn Allison and Kerry Nettle to officially launch the website; the then Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women's Issues declining to attend.

A resolution is only as good as its implementation. Seven years after it was passed, it is still not sufficiently vivid in the minds and hearts of those who ratified it, despite the Security Council calling upon its Member States to work on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 through the development of national action plans or other national strategies. As at December 2007, only eight countries had produced such a plan: Austria, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

It is our sincere hope that with the new Labor Government, a national action plan to implement SCR 1325 will now also be developed by Australia. We wish to draw to your attention in particular the Dutch plan which was developed in a consultative manner by Government, NGOs and Knowledge Institutions working jointly together on its formulation. With that in mind, WILPF hopes that 2008 will be the year to call interested parties (Government, NGOs, and Knowledge Institutions) together to develop a national action plan for Australia. We see the progression of such a plan as going some way towards restoring Australia to its former good standing in the international community and, to this end, we are currently preparing a proposal for consideration, in the first instance, by the WomenSpeak Network.

WILPF hopes you will be open to receiving a copy of this proposal.

Once again, our very warm wishes for your Ministerial appointment. We look forward to working with you over the coming years.

Yours sincerely

Cathy Picone and Ruth Russell  
Joint National Coordinators