

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) 896 4357 Email: wilpfaustralia@wilpf.org.au



6 March 2009

Hon Stephen Smith MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Smith

We are writing to inquire about Australia's official participation in the upcoming Review Conference of the United Nations World Conference on Racism, Racial Intolerance, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances (WCAR) to be held in Geneva from 20 – 24 April 2009.

The Australian Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) was a member of the Non-Governmental Committee that worked to educate and raise awareness throughout Australia in preparation for the WCAR that took place in Durban, South Africa from 31 August to 7 September 2001.

In Durban, WILPF's international members were involved in the WCAR parallel forum for non-governmental organisations. The official delegation from Australia led by the Hon Kay Patterson, then Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, comprised government and non-government members and contributed to positive outcomes in the areas of indigenous issues, cultural diversity and human rights education.

The importance of this Review Conference cannot be underestimated. Australia has an ever increasing number of different cultural and racial groups settling to live permanently and becoming citizens. Every Australian needs to be engaged in working to study and understand these differences so we can become a more harmonious society where all are accepted without discrimination of any kind, and racist attitudes and intolerances are a thing of the past. In addition, Australia has the eyes of the world on us due to the well-known and ongoing difficulties and gap in life expectancy endured by our Indigenous Australians.

For these reasons, WILPF believes that Australia should send a strong delegation to the Review Conference once again comprising both government and non-government members.

We would very much appreciate your informing us of the commitment of the Australian Government to the Review Conference.

We thank you for your kind attention and look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

Cathy Picone and Ruth Russell
Joint National Coordinators