

Report from the COP15 – Copenhagen December 2009

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We were standing shoulder to shoulder on a very cold and windy afternoon. We had thought that we could register faster if we did it the day before the COP15 started on Monday the 7th of December. We were a group of WILPFers who tried to stick together. We couldn't actually know if we were wrong about the speediness of the registration, however we felt that it was worthwhile standing there, moving five steps at a time on a day that got darker and darker and more and more windy and cold. Inside the building was a new queue for the security check – but this time, at least it was indoors. Snakes of queues were everywhere: for registration, for photos for the card that ensured us free transportation for what is called 'the Greater Copenhagen area.'

There are 16 of us in the 'official' WILPF delegation attending different parts of the conference during all the 14 days. We are also lobbying our governments. Annelise, as the President from Copenhagen, was pointed out as the 'head of the delegation.'

On Tuesday the 7th we had a WILPF internal meeting at the Danish WILPF office. There we planned how to manage covering as much as possible. Of course we wanted to prioritize the three different foci of our own, but also the discussion of, adding to and deleting from the draft of "A Peoples Declaration from Klimaforum09," which a preparatory committee had worked on for three months. WILPF's Working Group on Environment has not taken part in these preparations but Edel Havin Beukes, convenor of the Working Group, wanted us to try to get some WILPF perspectives on the final document. We agreed to make an effort because we thought that the main body of the Declaration was good.

The opening of the Klimaforum09

Some of us attended the opening ceremony, where we heard "remarks from the grassroots." We listened to speeches by Nnimmo Bassey (Chair of Friends of the Earth International), Henry Saragih (General Coordinator for La via Campesina) and most impressive of all, Naomi Klein, who was the key-note speaker and struck us as sharp and inspiring. We also witnessed the musical performance from the percussionists, Lisbeth Diers and Chime Transform, who played on ice, and El Hierro Beat, a seven piece international orchestra that mixes different sounds and traditions. They were chosen to perform because UNESCO endorses the island of El Hierro.

WILPF Input to the COP 15

On the 8th we had a meeting at the Klimaforum09: Women's Perspectives on Nuclear Energy. Edel Havin Beukes from the Norwegian Section and convenor of the Working Group on Environment made an introduction to the theme. Helen Caldicott also delivered an excellent and frightening keynote speech, entitled "Nuclear Power is not the Answer to Global Warning." Most of us were sitting with suppressed respiration as she spoke of the all too ugly, dangerous and awful truth about nuclear power. This goes to the core of WILPF's work and we need to communicate this to as many people as possible and as fast as possible. Eva Fidjestøl, who is also from the Norwegian Section, added information and experience about "The Truth about Chernobyl" and "Radiological Weapons." Kerstin presented the WILPF perspective and spoke about how Nuclear energy, uranium mining and uranium weapons would be focused on at this conference. We are extremely grateful that Helen Caldicott, who is the world's greatest expert on the nuclear and radioactive impact on life on earth and a WILPF member, was able to attend both the Klimaforum09 and the UN conference. Kerstin emphasized the need to act: we need to move forward on these issues along the same lines with what we are doing in the framework of Reaching Critical Will, the NPT-work and our overall disarmament work, including You Get What You Pay For.

On the 10th we had a meeting downtown in the Greenlandic House entitled “Gender and Conflict in the Crossfire of the Climate Change,” which was co-arranged by the Danish Section of WILPF and Women in Development. Maria Glinvad, a member of the Danish Section and Vice-President of Women in Development talked us through at which point, how and when different actors would react to different forms of climate change. She also pointed out the many reasons why women are affected in different and worse ways than men when it comes to the effects of climate change. Unfortunately Anna Pinto, Programme Director CORE, India and Global Justice Ecology Project, was delayed and therefore was not able to be there. However, Maria did a great job leading the meeting on her own. The open debate was very constructive and we ended up with ideas for further cooperation, eventually with a stronger focus.

A Peoples Declaration from Klimaforum09

We had representatives at all the meetings in the process of finalizing the Peoples Declaration. We went through the draft and found that we wanted to insert some language about gender sensitivity, gender equality (not only equity), and about how the UN is an important actor in this, which needs to be institutionally democratized. We suggested a paragraph on military spending (the military aspects were not mentioned at all in the draft) compared to spending on the needs of human beings (our “You Get What You Pay For” perspective), and on the false and dangerous promises of nuclear energy.

We actually succeeded in getting in a lot of what we had argued during the three days of meetings. Of course, no organization can get everything that they want into such a document, which should actually represent a range of very different organizations, individuals, interests, political points of view, personalities etc. etc. However we felt that we were pretty successful in getting our points of view into the final document and decided to sign on to it. We believe this document to be a good foundation for coalition work and lobbying amongst the sections. You can find the declaration on www.klimaforum09.org/Declaration in English, French and Spanish. On this page you also can follow what is happening at the Klimaforum during the coming week.

False Promises of Nuclear Energy

This was the second seminar that took place within the official conference in the Bella Centre on the morning before the big demonstration. The seminar was organized by WILPF and WECF (Women in Europe for a Common Future) in cooperation with IFG, Sortir du Nucleaire, NIRS, the Environmental Institute of Munich, Greenpeace, Ecodefense and WISE to “unmasking the true face of nuclear energy and presenting a proposal for a nuclear-free post-Kyoto regime.”

Helen Caldicott gave the keynote speech, which was followed by two panels. The first speech was about the situation in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Russia where people are severely suffering from the effects of nuclear research, bomb tests and accidents in nuclear power plants. The second panel presentation discussed research and actions that are taking place concerning the consequences of the past damage and the currently increasing propaganda on nuclear power as an alternative to save the climate.

The Demonstration

On the 12th most WILPFers were in the peace block demonstration. A couple of members from Australia were in the Green block since that had been decided long ago. We were walking under the beautiful banner of the Danish Section together with the Danish Women in Black, who had two banners. We were around 100.000 people and walked peacefully for the six kilometres from the Parliament (Christiansborg) to the Bella Centre.

Media from all over the world have reported on the violence. It is true that there was violence. There was an unregistered “Black Block” that dressed in black and wore scarves to cover their

faces, which is actually forbidden in Denmark. Fortunately the police managed to isolate and arrest them, which meant that they didn't succeed in completely spoiling the peaceful demonstration. There were extremely good speakers before the demonstration started, throughout the route and when it stopped at the Bella Centre: Mary Robinson, Rahul Bose (Bollywood Actor), Helle Thorning-Schmidt (MP and leader of the Danish Social Democrats), Margrete Vestager (MP and leader of the Social Liberals), Villy Søvndal (MP and leader of the Socialist Folk Party), Johanne Schmidt-Nielsen (MP for the Red-Green Alliance), Kumi Naidoo (South Africa, international Secretary General, Greenpeace), Helen Caldicott (anti nuclear expert and activist and member of WILPF), Ian Terry (fired Vestas wind mill factory worker from the Isle of Wight), Tom Goldtooth (Indigenous Environmental Network, US), Deepa Gupta (co-founder of Indian Youth Climate Network), Nnemmo Bassey (President of Friends of the Earth International, Nigeria). It was a very successful and peaceful demonstration with people of all colours, young and old, small children and their parents and lots and lots of colourful and imaginative banners and events along the route.

Acknowledgements

Finally we want to thank Edel for her hard work on fundraising to get Helen Caldicott to the Conference for a whole week. We also want to thank Helen, Edel and Maria for their extremely valuable and important contributions and our Danish Section for housing us and printing a very beautiful leaflet about our programme for the conference, which helped us bring over 150 participants to our events the first week. We hope that WILPF will have some impact on the second week through the Women's Caucus and by lobbying their governments.

We can all follow the development through www.klimaforum.dk and if you write to the e-mail address below you will receive material from the Women's Caucus: women_s-caucus@yahoogroups.com