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28 February 1992

Codesa Secretariat  
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1800

FAX NO: (011) 397-2211

Dear Sir/Madam

**WOMEN FOR PEACE - OUR WRITTEN SUBMISSION TO CODESA**

We are writing in response to a call from yourselves encouraging "the greatest possible participation by all interest groups from every walk of life", The Star, February 13 1992. Mention is also made in this letter of "provision having been made for all interest groups to make submissions to the five working groups of Codesa in order that these are taken into account in the deliberations of the working group."

Women for Peace as a national non-political organisation wishes to respond to the invitation for submissions. Our response to the submission is based on the following two issues:-

- (a) As a non-political organisation we are prevented from participating in the negotiations at Codesa. In spite of being a non-political organisation we have an input to make and a definite role to play; and
- (b) The need for greater participation of women at Codesa and in the future constitutional/political deliberations of South Africa.

We enclose a pamphlet which states our aims and objectives and what we stand for.

Our proposals and suggestions will be made under the various working groups:-

**WORKING GROUP 1**

Women for Peace along with other similar women's organisations have been working towards the peaceful change to a non-apartheid society for years.

With reference to clause 1.1.4, we have campaigned strongly on many of these issues in the past (copy letters are available on request).

We feel strongly that discussions aimed at the creation of a climate for free political participation are presently involving some so-called political organisations who have not always shown themselves to be champions of peaceful change; nor have they been impartial, something for which our organisation has a very good record.

Although we are a non-political organisation we would wish to make a contribution here - at least that we may put forward some of our leading women (not necessarily publicly known and recognised) who have experience in the political field.

## WORKING GROUP 2

Women for Peace requires women to be present at the negotiating table to make sure that the Constitution does not just specify racial equality, but it must include a stipulation on *gender* equality. Gender *inequality* (including outright discrimination against women) in the new South Africa must be seen to be unconstitutional.

The opening paragraph in this submission quoting from the Codesa secretariat clearly embraces women.

In South Africa women make up at least 53 percent of the population. The future of South Africa cannot possibly be determined without the role and support of women at the negotiating table. Historically, women have been grossly politically under-represented in South Africa, because the country is a patriarchal society. Only women can convincingly represent women's rights and interests.

It is important that the new constitution is non-sexist so that women in all walks of life and in all their respective activities and undertakings - social, political and economic will have their rights entrenched.

Women's status in South Africa must be upgraded on the widest scale possible - affirmative action must be taken in this regard not only by the Government of the day, but also by the private sector.

In order to achieve this it is suggested that a Bill of Rights be appended to the new Constitution as an annexure to the clause relating to gender equality.

It is acknowledged that various women's organisations (we are one of them) are working on a women's charter. One hopes that this document will not be too long in coming.

It is imperative that should a constitution-making body be formed (clause 2.1.5 of Codesa terms of reference for working group 2), that women from various organisations, both political and non-political participate.

## WORKING GROUP 3

It follows, (especially with reference to (b), above), that women, as natural negotiators, organisers and facilitators can make a great impact in this working group.

## WORKING GROUP 4

Over the years, Women for Peace has been involved through its work with the Wonderbox, with South Africans in rural areas - which would encompass the TBVC states.

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We have a number of members in our organisation with a special understanding of the needs and aspirations of South Africans in the TBVC states - we would recommend that they be consulted in negotiations on the future of these states.

A special concern of ours is that women in the TBVC states be consulted with regard to their future - that their needs, rights and aspirations be protected and respected.

#### WORKING GROUP 5

With reference to this group we would ask that all the working groups be requested to be sensitive to the inputs being prepared for consideration at Codesa eg the Women's Charter being prepared by the National Women's Coalition.

Such organisations, which by virtue of their non-political nature have not been granted a formal mouthpiece at Codesa. However, they have taken the initiative regarding women's interests by preparing the Women's Charter and this may well take a while to prepare. They are endeavouring to include inputs from all women's interest groups.

Therefore, the setting of time-scales for the completion of tasks by the various Codesa working groups is of the utmost importance. It is suggested that working group 5 take this into consideration.

In conclusion, we would reiterate that it is seemingly unfair that the Codesa negotiations, whilst seeking to advance the cause of a peaceful transition to a new deal for all South Africans, have seen fit to exclude non-political interest groups, many of whom are women, from the negotiating tables.

Most of these interest groups, many of whom have been active for years, have played a very constructive role regarding the welfare and needs of South Africans. *Because* they are non-political, they have been accepted and trusted by many South Africans.

Such knowledge and experience and expertise really cannot afford to be ignored by those who wish to design our future.

Yours faithfully



PP  
JANET SEMPLE (MRS)  
NATIONAL CO-CHAIR  
WOMEN FOR PEACE

## Aims and Objectives:

- \* To become aware of the needs and problems of all people living in South Africa
- \* To promote communications and understanding between all races
- \* To work towards equal opportunities for all
- \* To utilise the power of women to make the necessary representations and explore all avenues of seeking peaceful change
- \* Above all to ACT

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## WOMEN FOR PEACE

- \* is a national organisation with Branches around the country
- \* is committed to bringing women together, and through women, the people of our country
- \* promotes inter-relationship between people who have had no opportunity to know each other
- \* works in our various communities to bring hope and opportunity to people who can see no alternative to the achievement of their goals other than violence and anti-social behaviour
- \* provides a forum through conferences and meetings where women can exchange ideas and philosophies to find common ground and play a convincing role in shaping the future post-apartheid society
- \* is totally opposed to violence and actively seeks peace and justice for all
- \* creates public awareness through publications, research and surveys
- \* is committed to working for a better future for all our children

## Branches in:

Klerksdorp  
Alexandra  
Sandton  
Soweto  
Johannesburg  
Coronationville/EldoradoPark  
Benoni  
Daveyton  
Lenasia  
Reiger Park  
Kimberley  
Plettenberg Bay  
Welkom  
Cape Town

Branch activities are many and various. They include:- classes in music, literacy and typing, dress-making, nutrition, crafts; community advice centres; wilderness trails; youth clubs; penfriend clubs; upgrading of school subjects such as English, Maths and Science; creches; the Wonderbox; work with aged and handicapped.