

PRESS RELEASE

Srinagar, 30th September 2011

Intra-LoC Women's Dialogue on 'Women's Roles in Society: Issues of Mutual Concern'

A two day intra-Kashmir cross-LoC women's dialogue on 'Women's Roles in Society: Issues of Mutual Concern' took place in Gulmarg from the 27th to 29th of September, 2011. Forty five women from all regions of J-K, as well as AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan participated in it. The dialogue was organized by the Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation (CDR), New Delhi, and Women for Peace, Srinagar.

CDR has held a series of dialogues between various stakeholders and civil society actors from the regions of Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir since 2003. As a part of these efforts, CDR organised its first Intra-Kashmir women's conference in November, 2007, which was among the first efforts to connect women across the LoC and to bridge divides.

The Gulmarg conference deliberated on Women's Roles in Peace-building, Women's Roles in Policy-making, and, Socio-economic and Legal Issues in Women's Empowerment and ended with the following resolution:

We, the women of entire Jammu and Kashmir, from both sides of the LOC desire peace, security, and economic stability to prevail throughout the region and an immediate end to the protracted conflict.

We demand the inclusion of women in all peace-building and peace negotiations/dialogue on Kashmir.

As an outcome of these two days' deliberations we have resolved the following:

The resolution on Kashmir must reflect the aspirations of all regions and communities of all parts of undivided Jammu and Kashmir, including Gilgit Baltistan.

We demand from our respective governments:

- * the simplification of procedures in trade, communication and travel across the LOC and opening of other trade and travel routes, like Kargil-Skardu, Chamb-Bhimbar, and Leh-Khaplu;
- * the cease-fire be respected with immediate halt to violations and land mine issues be addressed;
- * the immediate release and return of stray crossers;

- * the immediate phased de-militarization in all civilian areas, and repeal of draconian acts like AFSPA and PSA;
- * the government review its policy towards the SPOs, SOGs, and VDCs;
- * an end to human rights abuses and violations of all kinds - arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforced disappearances, sexual violence, crackdowns, searches, displacement of all kinds, rehabilitation of displaced communities without segregation - by all sides;
- * thirty three percent women's representation in legislative assemblies, councils, and local bodies on both sides of the LOC;
- * adequate women's representation in departments dealing with gender issues;
- * representation of women in and the strengthening of autonomous and independent state institutions to monitor and report gender-based issues, like State Commission for Women, State Human Rights Commission, Information Commission, and the establishment of similar commissions in other regions where they do not currently exist;
- * the establishment of legal aid committees and village helpline by the state to immediately address issues of half-widows and sexual assault;
- * state compensations to be covered under civil law;
- * immediate people friendly police reforms and gender sensitization of all the law enforcement agencies;
- * greater access to women and female education;
- * revisiting of the curriculum;
- * student and faculty exchange program across LoC;
- * implementation of gender budgeting and allocation of resources across sectors;
- * increase women's access to micro-financing schemes;
- * increased vocational and skills training for women;
- * processes be simplified to facilitate SMEs, and marketing facilities be increased for small entrepreneurs;
- * effective implementation of wage policy for women;
- * women's health issues, especially maternal and infant mortality and mental health issues, to be immediately addressed;

We, the participants of this conference, resolve to:

* network through internet and other means for inter-regional, inter-community, cross-LoC networking of women's groups and individuals for peace building;

* establish a joint forum of women's organizations working for peace from both sides of the LoC for inclusion in all peace negotiations and discussions and also to reach out to grass-roots women's organizations and policy makers.