

Courtesy Translation

Mr Torsten Schramm
Chairman of the Executive Committee
of Weltfriedensdienst e.V.

cc: Heidi Meinzolt, Member of the Coordination Group of the Women's Security Council
and Middle-East Coordinator at the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Ms Dagmar Schumacher, Director of the Brussels Office of UNIFEM
Mr Christian Clages, German Ambassador in Dakar

19 October 2011

Dear Mr Schramm,

The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkul Karman has once again underlined the importance of women's advocacy for peace, human rights and democracy.

The parliamentary group spokespersons on the Subcommittee on Civilian Crisis Prevention and Integrated Conflict Management at the German Bundestag view the award of this prize as a strong signal regarding the role of women in peace processes. In December 2010, the Subcommittee held a public hearing entitled "10 years of UN-Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security", which provided an opportunity for an in-depth discussion of this. Resolution 1325, adopted in 2000, called strongly for greater participation of women in conflict resolution, from their involvement in political processes and institutions to the planning and organisation of peacekeeping operations, and the negotiation of peace agreements.

The advocacy work carried out by the platform Women for Peace in Casamance, which you describe, is an impressive example of the role which women can play in conflict situations. The forgotten conflict in Casamance (Senegal) has, since 1982, left thousands dead, injured or mutilated, as well as creating thousands of refugees and orphans. Even today, bloody clashes, landmine victims, rapes, forced recruitment and attacks on villages and travellers remain regular occurrences. And, almost since the beginning of

this conflict, Africa's longest running, secret negotiations have been ongoing between the government and representatives of the various factions of the armed autonomy movement. These initiatives have so far failed to alleviate the suffering of the population described above. Instead, the war economy is flourishing. Influential forces therefore have a vested interest in the continuation of the war. They are aided and abetted in this by the lack of transparency in the negotiating processes, the exclusion of those most affected from the negotiating processes and the lack of interest by the international public. Additionally, there is the regional and international dimension of the conflict, with the political and economic interests of Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Gambia and Guinea/Conakry, together with the economic interests of the drug-smuggling trade, which is almost impossible to monitor, and the associated violent criminal conflict.

In Casamance, a Women for Peace platform has been formed across the ethnic, social and political dividing lines. It now represents over 20,000 women in the region and is underpinned by a broad coalition of supporters there, from religious leaders to pop stars. It also receives assistance from the German side, via civil-society and state actors. Representatives of the platform have now been integrated into the national implementation process of UN Resolution 1325 and, even previously to this, with support from the United Nations development fund for women, UNIFEM, they had translated the resolution text into local languages and circulated it.

Yet, unless complementary and vigorous initiatives are taken at international level, no breakthrough towards a serious negotiating process can be expected. The Subcommittee would therefore welcome it if the European and international public were to pay the work done by the Women for Peace platform greater attention and take up the platform's demand to participate on an equal footing in a transparent negotiating process, as well as in all other bodies involved in conflict mediation.

Yours sincerely,

Sgd.

Joachim Spatz, MdB (Chair)

Kerstin Müller, MdB (Deputy Chair)

Roderich Kiesewetter, MdB (Spokesman)

Edelgard Bulmahn, MdB (Spokeswoman)

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