

---

# END OF YEAR LETTER TO OUR MEMBERS

---

## CREATING A NEW NARRATIVE



---

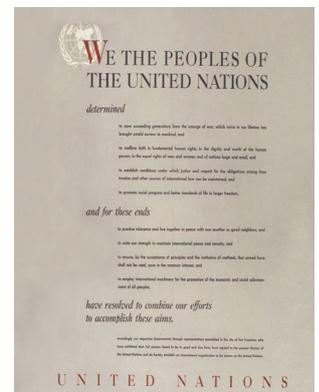
## WE MARCHED

---

The year started with the Women's March for Dignity, which sounded a call across the globe to reaffirm women's rights. As a women's peace organisation with more than 100 years' experience protesting against social injustice and making our voices heard at the United Nations, demanding equality, peace and freedom for all, it went without saying that [WILPFers on 21 January would be marching across the globe in support of the Women's March](#) - and we did. It was far from the first time WILPF took to the streets, and it is clearly not meant to be the last. We predict that more marches and other on-street demonstrations are to come in the years ahead.

# WE REBELLED

Exclusion of women at important international events such as the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) has its consequences. Due to the travel ban from the new US Administration, [WILPF International decided not to participate in CSW61](#) in solidarity with women from countries affected by the travel ban. We did so as a matter of principle because we believe that international peace must be sought and guaranteed through the multilateral system. Seen from our perspective, the decision of the US Administration made it impossible for the UN to fulfil its role to represent We the People and to be true to its founding principles.



Participants at WILPF's convening. © Irina Popa

- » WILPF believes that without women's real participation in the debates, the reality of their lives cannot accurately be brought to the attention of decision-makers, including policy drafters and Member States.
- » WILPF believes that the travel ban in the long run is a threat to the integrity of the United Nations.
- » WILPF supports the work of the UN, and continues to work on bringing it back to its Charter and to the peace organisation it was intended to be.

As a response to the events around CSW61, we organised a large convening in Geneva around the 102nd anniversary of WILPF. [From 26 to 28 April, 150 women \(and some men\) gathered on our initiative at the UN in Geneva to discuss how to ensure women's meaningful participation in the UN system and processes.](#) The initiative was just the start of a longer and enduring process, and should be seen as a WILPF initiative targeting our joint goal on strengthening the multilateral system.

---

# WE BANNED NUCLEAR WEAPONS

---



Women's March to Ban the Bomb.  
© David Field and Eric Espino

WILPF was the official host of the [Women's March to Ban the Bomb](#), a global public mobilisation that took place on 17 June as negotiations resumed at the United Nations for a treaty banning nuclear weapons. Our staff and members around the world worked closely with other women-led organisations for peace, disarmament, women's rights, and indigenous, environmental, and human rights communities to coordinate this epic event.

While the primary march and rally took place in New York City, there were about 150 diverse solidarity actions all over the world! Many [WILPF Sections and Groups organised solidarity walks](#) showing the commitment of our movement.



WILPF Cameroon's solidarity event.  
© WILPF Cameroon

---

# AND WON THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

---

Recognition at the highest level for the joint work between organisations as part of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) came with the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize award. WILPF is as an active member of ICAN's International Steering Group and has been since ICAN was established, investing considerable efforts in achieving the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. [The Nobel Peace Prize has been a valuable acknowledgement](#) for all the hard work made within the ICAN coalition.



## DIVIDED BY GEOGRAPHIES BUT UNITED BY ZEAL

### WILPF SECTIONS SPEAK

*A sample of WILPF Section and WILPF Group responses to the recent ExCom questionnaire about what makes WILPF meaningful for members; and the lessons that may be drawn for WILPF's structure*

September 2017



The report "WILPF Sections Speak 2017" noted that, by working together, WILPF members support forging relationships and generating knowledge on solutions that work in peace-building. Relationships, team spirit and collaboration, along with trust and experience-sharing, were some of the main strengths identified through the report on membership. These are the true examples of WILPF sisterhood.

We are exceptionally proud of our members across the globe who work against the odds of political instability and conflict.

We are aware that WILPF activists, members, staff and partners are frequently exposed to great risks, on both individual and operational levels. This is why the development of the WILPF Security Protocol in 2017 has been [a much-needed step to ensure safety, mitigate risks and know how we can respond in the event of a security incident](#). It is our hope that the Security Protocol will enable the members of our community to be better prepared and have a stronger response mechanism to incidents that sadly might occur.



There is an infinite number of examples of how WILPF Sections across the globe are challenging the status quo and striving for a better, more peaceful future on a daily basis. Approaches to complex problems are multidimensional and often include education and training, advocacy and political manoeuvring. Let's look at just a few examples.

WILPF Colombia has started a project called **"Women coffee farmers build peace in three regions affected by conflict in Colombia"**. This project seeks to reach women, who are often victims of displacement or former combatants, enabling economic empowerment and building peace - one coffee bean at a time. The women receive training on Fair Trade entrepreneurship, and learn to defend and exercise their rights as women entrepreneurs and coffee farmers.



We would also like to shine a spotlight on WILPF Cameroon. In 2017, they contributed to the launching of **Cameroon's National Action Plan**. This achievement of historical value was directed by members of WILPF Cameroon, who organised training workshops on the contribution of women in peacebuilding and pushed the civic sector into advocacy towards the implementation of the National Action Plan.



Caption: Members of WILPF Cameroon celebrated the launching of the NAP



Another achievement comes from our Section in the UK who, at the end of 2017, developed a campaign to raise awareness and show solidarity with women refugees in an attempt to debunk some of the common myths surrounding them. As part of this campaign they organised a seminar on the topic of **"Voices of refugee women"**. In the run-up to the seminar they also published testimonies and organised trainings and meetings, bringing communities together to discuss human rights.



The Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women Peace and Security (WPS)

Another example of National Action Plan (NAP) advocacy comes from WILPF Australia. For almost a decade WILPF Australia has been the driving force behind the development of the NAP on women peace and security and in 2013, the Section was key in establishing the Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women Peace and Security (WPS). This year, the Coalition conducted a series of community engagements in all the capital cities as a precursor to formal community consultations planned for 2018.

In Germany, WILPF members organised an [award ceremony and symposium in the town of Verden](#) to commemorate one of our founding mothers, Anita Augspurg, on what would have been her 160th birthday. The award bearing her name is intended to celebrate her prominent influence in the women's rights and feminist pacifist movement. During the event, WILPF Germany recognised the efforts of Zaina Erhaim, a young Syrian journalist and film-maker, by giving her a peace award for her groundbreaking work with women at local and regional levels.



Young WILPF'ers from around the world met at the Anita Augspurg "Rebels Against War" Prize.

And how could we not mention WILPF DRC's 10th anniversary? To mark the occasion, between 4 and 6 December 2017, WILPF DRC brought together women peacemakers for a conference called "10 years of consolidation of peace in DRC by women, for women and for all". It was a great [display of solidarity](#) that saw strong and bold women coming together from the countries most affected by war and conflict to share experiences in panels and discussions on how to collectively work for the consolidation of peace in DRC and beyond.



WILPF DRC Conference "10 years of Consolidation of Peace in DRC by Women, for Women and for All".  
© Micheline Muzaneza

And finally, in 2017 many WILPF sections took their own initiatives and continued WILPF's efforts on achieving a world free from nuclear weapons. For example, WILPF France launched a [petition for signing of the UN Treaty](#), while WILPF US started a similar campaign in which the [petition called the US President and the Senate to support the Treaty](#) and to set the path towards addressing human and environmental needs instead of investing further in nuclear arsenal. Another example is the campaign run by WILPF Italy that, besides co-organising a sit-in in front of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in September, also started a series of initiatives under the project titled the "[Women's caravan for nuclear disarmament](#)".

And, since WILPF is all about community, in order to have a space for members to meet and interact in relation to achievements, challenges and political realities, 2017 has seen the start of a new webinar series called "[We Are WILPF](#)". As of September 2017, Sections have been presenting their stories, exploring the pillars of their work and sharing what inspires them on a daily basis through a monthly webinar series. The series is a tool to narrow the geographic distances between all of us and to exploit the benefits of technology in creating a stronger movement. Furthermore, the webinars are also a resource that can be accessed, listened to again and discussed, which helps in preparing a more strategic global act for feminist peace.



This collection of events and efforts, on global, national and local levels, have brought us to this point where, with the lessons learnt from 2017, we can press forward and strategise our moves through 2018.

# WHAT WILL FEMINIST GOVERNANCE LOOK LIKE?



ExCom and conveners of the Standing Committees meeting in Geneva.  
© Nina Hansen

In light of the 2016 WILPF's evaluation, and continuing the work of the Ad Hoc Committee and the Standing Constitution Committee asked by the 2015 Congress, throughout the year ExCom and members of the Standing Committees have come together and debated WILPF's governance. During the process, the working group assigned with the task to documenting the revised governance has been in regular and direct contact with Sections and members to gather your input on how best we together can develop a more accountable and inclusive membership-led organisation.



African regional meeting in Kinshasa (DRC).  
© Micheline Muzaneza

As part of this effort, during the year WILPF Sections and members have organised regional meetings, both in person and online, to discuss how we can optimise WILPF's organisational structure. The Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome was one such occasion used to [gather WILPFers from across Europe](#) to discuss how to meet stringent organisational and political priorities. On the other side of the globe, the Asia Pacific regional meeting gathered members separated by thousands of miles via a simple, reliable and safe video conference. The aims of the meeting were to: build relationships across the region; learn about current and future directions in WILPF from WILPF International President Kozue Akibayashi; and build participation for WILPF's important online meetings in September-October and early next year.

Finally, the [African Regional meeting](#) that took place in DRC on 2 and 3 December created a space for members to discuss how to strengthen decision-making and work together in a common direction.



WILPF members participating at the March for Europe.  
© Elena Cason

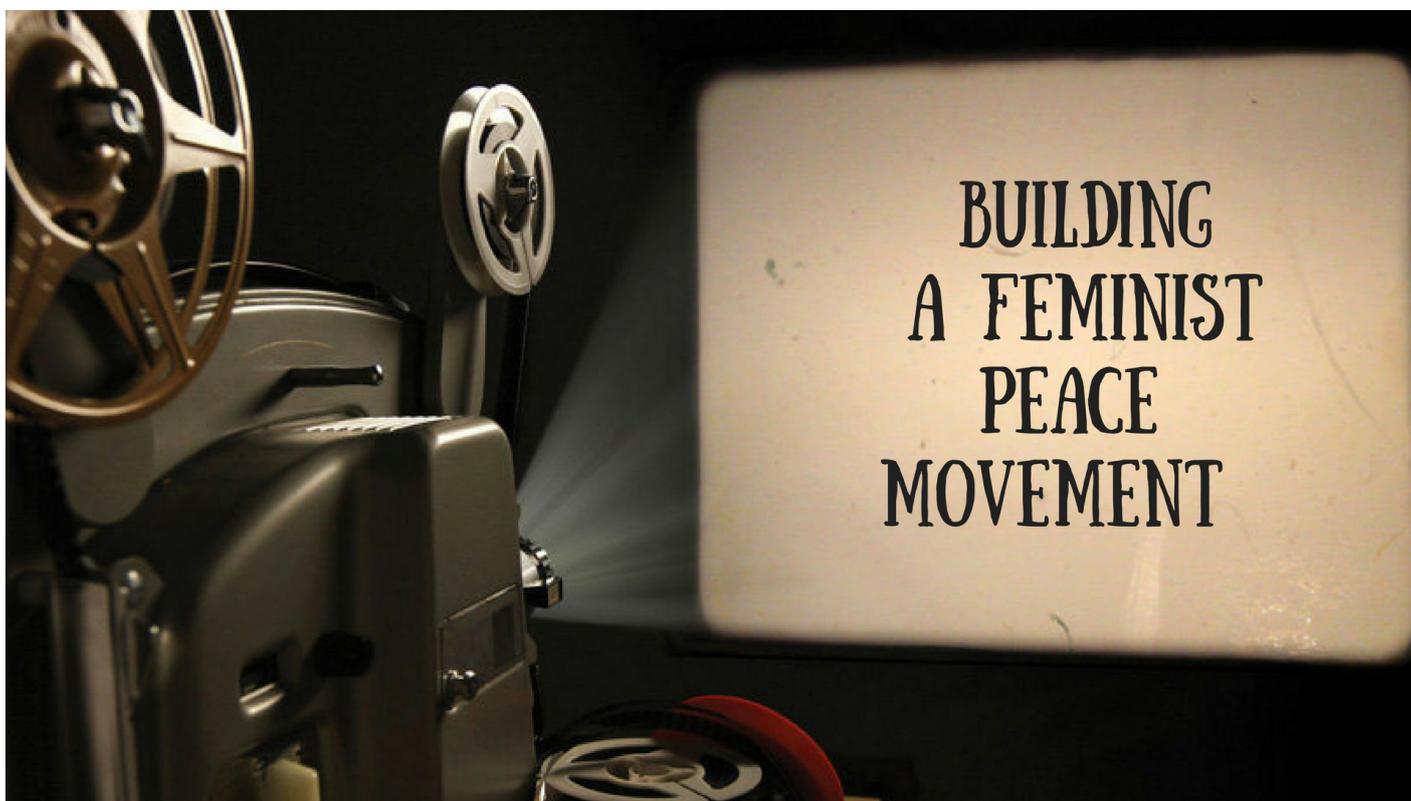
The proposal for an improved governance structure was then shared with members in October, with the aim of conducting further consultations within Sections and across regions. This built towards the [International Board \(IB\) meeting](#) which took place on 27 November and 11 December. At the end of the meeting, it was agreed that the Drafting Group will continue the discussion on WILPF's governance, drawing on input from Sections and an open discussion forum on myWILPF. The final proposal will then be sent to the Standing Constitution Committee, which will draft a revised Constitution.

We would like to remind you that the call for your feedback is still open and your thoughts will be useful for finalising the proposal. We invite you to log in to [myWILPF](#) and get involved in the ongoing discussion.



WILPF members attending the Asia Pacific online regional meeting.

# THE ROAD TO CONGRESS



The preparations for our [International Triennial Congress](#) are well underway. This will be an historic Congress, the first to be held in Africa. The date is set for 19 to 24 August, when WILPF members will gather in Accra (Ghana) around the theme “Building a feminist peace movement”. At the moment, parallel efforts are being invested into developing the International Programme 2018-2021, providing feedback to the final proposal on strengthening the governance of WILPF, and developing a revised Constitution.

The IB meeting has been a key milestone towards the next year’s Congress and has been well supported by many of our Sections, but we always look forward to seeing you in greater numbers. After all, we are here to create opportunities and spaces where you can voice your opinions because we are committed to our membership and your engagement.

As we make big steps towards Congress, we need fully engaged members to shape and endorse the new pathways. We are already witnessing members making plans to come together regionally to frame the direction of our organisation, and invite others to do the same. We will be there to support you in this endeavour.

# A LEARNING COMMUNITY IN THE MAKING



WILPF is growing stronger as an organisation thanks to members' active engagement, willingness and ability to provide their skills and share their experiences. Educating ourselves to identify, think about and resolve conflicts is an ongoing mission, one that is of utmost importance amid the ever-changing social and technological realities. We need to constantly test our methods on our own work, review them along with the outcomes and learn how to adapt them in new situations and contexts. Furthermore, in order to achieve our goals we have to demonstrate that we can function as a coherent and comprehensive unit, with members across the world who are engaged and actively supporting WILPF's mission in a way that demonstrates that our methods work.

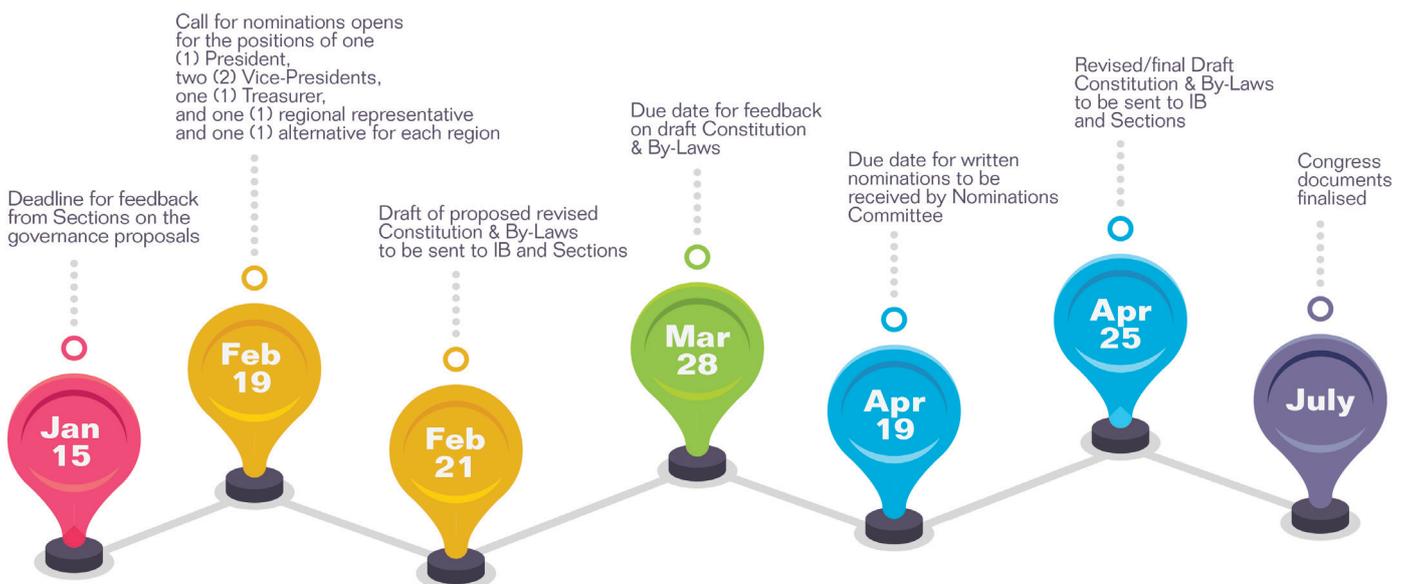
Some learning outcomes from the activities in 2017 show us that this worldwide engagement doesn't come without challenges, one of them being online communication through virtual meetings. Slowly, and with much careful consideration to differences in members' contextual realities, we are learning how to overcome the barriers that unequal access to technology presents today and develop a truly inclusive community. That said, it is vital to understand the existing technological obstacles and how best we can play around them to our benefit. The development and use of internal communication channels is important, because if used well they can provide an effective driver for achieving our goals for peace and freedom. But let's remind ourselves that excelling in virtual communication is a learning curve, one that we are conquering bit by bit every day.



Peace Palace group photo. © Li Grebäck

## SEE YOU IN GHANA!

Looking forward, 2018 is going to be a big year, one in which we will witness the first ever WILPF Congress to be held in Africa. This is our chance to continue the journey of our foremothers and show the strength of our diverse movement as we work as OneWILPF.



## WITH LOVE

We would like to thank our staff for all their hard work and tireless championing of WILPF's mission and values, both inside and outside the conference rooms.

We are grateful for all the enthusiastic participation of members at meetings and webinars, for your thought-provoking questions and constitutive feedback. Your support and commitment are what keeps us going.

Thank you for being part of this beautiful journey!

*Your Executive Committee*

