

THE INITIATIVE FOR INCLUSIVE SECURITY

PRESS RELEASE

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25 Women From Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Conflict Areas Demand Seat at the Table, Legal Rights in their Countries *Women Meet With State Department, UN, Other Officials*

WASHINGTON, DC —The Initiative for Inclusive Security, including The Women Waging Peace Network, this week convened a unique forum bringing together women leaders in post-conflict areas to brainstorm negotiating tactics, grassroots action, and political and legal maneuvers to create social change and stop the cycle of war. Each has overcome tremendous odds to pursue peace and social justice in their respective countries. They are legislators, civic leaders, lawyers, judges, scholars, and grassroots organizers, all deeply involved in efforts to strategize creative methods to promote legal reform and enhance women's rights. The seventh annual Colloquium, held from January 9-20, 2006, also includes key policymakers from United States Government agencies, the United Nations, foreign governments, world financial institutions, regional security organizations, and NGOs.

Twenty-five international women leaders today shared their expertise with nearly 400 high-level policy shapers and together they'll hammer out strategies for concrete policy change. Both groups will learn from each other as they compare ideas on specific social, political, and economic tactics.

The Women Waging Peace Network is an invaluable resource for policy shapers seeking local leaders and advisors to help rebuild communities devastated by war. These women are on the front lines of conflict resolution and reconciliation. They often watch as their sons and husbands are taken as combatants or prisoners of war; many are left to care for the surviving children and elders. They organize protests against violence, gather evidence of human rights abuses, mediate among warring factions, and repair shattered societies.

The chair and founder of The Initiative for Inclusive Security, Swanee Hunt says, “policy makers typically ignore the women on the ground and talk only to the men, forgetting that it's the women who have been organizing at the grassroots, talking to each other across conflict lines. Although women have experience holding the community together, they tend to be left out of all phases of peace processes. We want to change that by raising women's voices—and profiles—to decision-makers worldwide.”

“Societies build strength, stability, and prosperity when they make the most of all of their human resources, and allow all of their citizens to participate and contribute,” **said Senator Ken Salazar.** “It is my hope we can help countries emerging from conflict reach a level of participation by all their citizens that will provide stability in every region of the world. I applaud The Initiative for Inclusive Security's efforts to accomplish this goal.”

Jean-Marie Guehenno, UN Undersecretary General for Peace Keeping Operations added, “it is our obligation to provide women with the space and support they need to fulfill their aspirations for equal rights in all spheres. It is a crucial factor in ensuring our success in supporting sustainable peace.”

The Initiative for Inclusive Security, a program of Hunt Alternatives Fund, advocates for the full participation of all stakeholders, especially women, in peace processes. Creating sustainable peace is achieved best by a diverse, citizen-driven approach. Of the many sectors of society currently excluded from peace processes, none is larger—or more critical to success—than women. Since 1999, Inclusive Security has connected more than 400 women experts with over 3,000 policy shapers to collaborate on fresh, workable solutions to long-standing conflicts across the globe. For more information visit www.WomenWagingPeace.net.

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