

## **Colombia Hosts “Women and Power” Conference**

*International forum features 3 members of the Women Waging Peace Network*

**CAMBRIDGE, MA** – May 17, 2007 – As Colombia continues to grapple with its 40-year-old armed conflict, Colombian women are leaving their mark on the country’s peace and reconciliation efforts. Working as journalists, NGO and grassroots leaders, and at the highest levels of government, women peace builders have spoken boldly against the guerrilla warfare that has plagued Colombia since the 1960s, lobbied on behalf of the country’s 2.5 million internally displaced persons, and led the movement toward reconciliation.

On Thursday, May 24, Colombia will celebrate the achievements of its women by hosting [“Women and Power,”](#) an international forum. More than 1,000 people are expected to attend the two-day conference, which will be held in Bogotá. “Women and Power” is convened by the president of the Colombian Congress, Dilian Francisca Toro, and the Congress’ Women’s Caucus. **Isabel Londoño**, a member of [The Initiative for Inclusive Security’s Women Waging Peace Network](#), is the coordinator for the Women’s Caucus and the academic director of the conference.

In addition to coordinating the conference, Dr. Londoño, the president of the Foundation of Women for Colombia, will serve as moderator for one of the panel discussions, “Mechanisms to Further Women’s Political Participation.” Two other members of the Women Waging Peace Network, **Senators Gina Parody and Piedad Córdoba**, will participate in the panel “Women, Peace, Justice, and Solidarity.” They will discuss women’s contributions to peace negotiations, the opportunities and obstacles they face in the administration of justice, and the proposed law on violence against women currently under debate in the Colombian Congress.

Luis Eduardo Garzón, the mayor of Bogotá, and President Alvaro Uribe will open the forum, along with [President Toro of the Colombian Congress](#). The panelists hail from Colombia and its Latin American neighbors and from countries as diverse as Iran, India, and China.

[The Initiative for Inclusive Security](#) has worked closely with Colombian women peace builders since 1999. Inclusive Security made its first trip to Bogotá in August 2005, and has made two three subsequent trips. From May 16-17, 2007, Inclusive Security led a training for more than 30 prosecutors working in Colombia’s Attorney General’s Justice and Peace Unit, helping to ensure that judicial processes are gender-sensitive. Inclusive Security also had several high-level advocacy meetings, including one with Women Waging Peace Network Members Ana Teresa Bernal and Patricia Buritica, both of the National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation. Inclusive Security is also advising the government’s High Commission for Reintegration on inclusiveness as they design their strategic plan and build a reintegration database for ex-combatants.

One highlight of Inclusive Security’s previous trip, in [November 2006](#), was a two-day workshop given for the National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation aimed at a gender-sensitive transitional justice process.

### **International Forum – Women and Power**

**WHO:** Dilian Francisca Toro, president of Colombian Congress; the Women’s Caucus of the Colombian Congress; and Women Waging Peace Network Member Isabel Londoño Polo, Academic Director.  
**WHERE:** Bogotá Chamber of Commerce  
**WHEN:** May 24 and May 25, 2007

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**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 500 women experts with over 5,000 policy shapers to collaborate on fresh, workable solutions to long-standing conflicts across the globe. For more information visit [www.InclusiveSecurity.org](http://www.InclusiveSecurity.org).