

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY
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Keynote Speech by EMA TAGICAKIBAU¹
[IANSA Women's Network/Pacific Network for Peace & Disarmament]

**"WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN PEACE-BUILDING AND REBUILDING LIVES:
RESISTING WAR AND MILITARISM IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC"**

Salutation/Greetings

"Ni sa bula vinaka" which means, 'Very warm greetings' in my native Fijian language. It is indeed an honour to be present here today, and I greet you all on behalf of the IANSA² Women's Network and the Pacific Network for Peace and Disarmament (PANPAD).

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the presence and support of the President and officials of the Pangasinan State University (PSU), as our hosts for the week. I also wish to congratulate the organisers of this Conference: Madame Merci Llarinas-Angeles, Attorney Corazon Fabros, and Dr Irene de Vera of PSU, of the strong Peace-women Partners global network. Thank you for inviting me to deliver the keynote address on the theme, "**Women as Leaders in Peace-building and Re-building Lives: Resisting War and Militarism.**"

Please allow me to record my immense gratitude to Quaker NZ for the Loxley Peace award which granted me travel funds to be able to attend this Conference. I pay tribute in particular to the memory of the late Ms Barbara Thompson of Wellington, New Zealand, a Quaker woman who left behind a legacy and in whose memory the peace award was made. I was told that Barbara loved gardening, so I pray that the seeds of peace she sowed through her legacy would translate across our region from this Conference.

1.0. Making the Argument for Women's Role in Peace-building and Rebuilding Lives: Resisting War and Militarism

My presentation is grounded on a Feminist 'standpoint' framework which views war and militarism from women's lived realities and experiences. The presentation is in two parts: the **first** makes general observations and comments on the state of war,

¹ Doctoral Candidate, Department of Political Studies, University of Auckland; Interim Coordinator (Voluntary), IANSA Women's Network and Coordinator, Pacific Network on Peace and Disarmament (PANPAD)

² IANSA- International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA)

militarism, weapons and gender; while the **second** part gives examples of different strategies and contexts where women have taken leadership roles to reclaim and sustain peace in their communities.

Women make up half of the population in most countries, and contribute significantly to their nation's economy. While they do not make the decisions to go to war, they suffer disproportionately as direct or indirect casualties. Women may also support war, whether willingly or coerced, as soldiers (including child soldiers), spies, cooks, nurses, prostitutes, or as wives and mothers of male soldiers, fighters, etc. This presentation however will focus on women who, in their own peaceful ways, question, probe, confront and **resist** the injustices and senselessness of armed violence, militarism and war.

The critical role of women in peace and security has increasingly been recognised in global instruments. The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA)³ and the UNSCR⁴ 1325 on Women, Peace and Security of October 2000 and subsequent resolutions,⁵ promote women's equal role in conflict resolution and peace-building, and address particular concerns for women's protection during times of war and armed conflict.

The BPfA emphasised that gender equality and women's participation are inseparable from sustainable peace and development. It identifies positive processes to achieve peace as: complete disarmament; the prevention of policies of aggression; diverting excessive military expenditures to social development; and recognizing the leadership role of women for advancing a culture of peace. It also includes promoting 'non-violent forms of conflict resolution' and reducing the incidence of human rights abuse in conflict situations.⁶

UNSCR 1325 promotes women's leadership in peace-building and conflict prevention by:

- increasing the number of women in peace and security decision-making roles both nationally and within the UN;
- increasing women's participation in peace talks and peacekeeping missions; and
- improving the capability of peacekeeping missions to respond to men's and women's needs and gender training for all actors involved in the maintenance of peace and security.

³ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>

⁴ UNSCR 1325-United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security

⁵ UNSCR 1820, UNSCR 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122 and 2242

⁶ Women's Peacemakers Programme. 2015. Consultation on "Gender And Militarism In Asia: Linking Regional Analysis To Local Practices," Dec 7-9 2015, Manila, Philippines

Despite the gains made in broadening the scope of women in the peace and security agenda, concerns have been raised that UNSCR 1325 has become a tool for states to support women's recruitment into militarized institutions to promote gender equality, thereby further increasing the "militarization" of women.⁷

1.1. Gender as driver of militarism and war

Jacklyn Cock⁸ argues that militarization, which is the mobilization of resources for war, is a gendering process that maintains an ideological construction of gender in defining masculinity and femininity. Women are cast into the feminine role of the "defended," to be "protected" while confined to the domestic arena due to their child-bearing/nurturing role, while males are the perceived 'protectors', 'defenders,' 'soldiers' or 'warriors', whose masculinity is ideal for defending the vulnerable, in active combat in public spaces.

Feminist scholar Cynthia Enloe⁹ views militarism as a package of ideas, assumptions, values and beliefs, and such values include aggression, dominance, violence, force, etc. Sandra Whitworth (2004)¹⁰ and Enloe point out that part of military training involves preparing soldiers to react quickly in highly aggressive and violent circumstances. Thus the masculinity of many male soldiers changes during such training process, creating what they call a 'militarized masculinity.'

1.2. Weapons as Gendered Drivers of War and Militarism

Men tend to enjoy a 'special relationship' with their weapons.¹¹ Such a relationship between 'masculine' men and weapons prevails almost everywhere, from television images, media advertising, Hollywood movies and even on UN peacekeeping missions. Weapons systems are designed mostly by men, marketed mostly for men and used mostly by men—and in many parts of the world they are the primary source of death for men. Gender, in this case masculinity, is socially constructed, hence there is a need to analyse the special bond between men and their weapons and its links to violent notions of masculinity, in order to develop sustainable disarmament policies.

⁷ Women's Peacemakers Partnership (WPP)

⁸ Jacklyn Cock. 1992. *Women, the Military and Militarisation: some questions raised by the South African case*. Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, Seminar No 7, 1992: University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

⁹ Cynthia Enloe. 2000. *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

¹⁰ Sandra Whitworth. 2004. *Men, Militarism, and UN Peacekeeping: A Gendered Analysis*, (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p.28. See also Enloe, 2000.

¹¹ Henri Myrtilinen. 2003. 'Disarming masculinities.' *Women, Peace and Security: Disarmament Forum 4*: p37; see also http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/unidir_disarmingmasculinities_2006_0.pdf

One indicator of militarism in our countries is the increasing military budget when compared with education, health and social sector programs. According to the [SIPRI database on military expenditure](#),¹² the World military expenditure in 2014 was estimated at \$1776 billion. The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action specifically called for a reduction in military expenditures, yet global trends are going in the opposite direction.

Five Asian countries (India, China, Pakistan, South Korea & Singapore), are among the top ten arms importers in the world. China also ranks among the top arms exporters (mostly western countries). Arms trafficked through the porous borders find their way into the hands of insurgent groups across Asia, posing serious threats to peace, security and stability in the region as a whole, and exacerbating some of the region's longest running conflicts (e.g. Mindanao in the Philippines, Manipur in Northeast India). Human security expert, the late Dr Mahbub al Haq¹³ of Pakistan, had pointed to the contradiction of arms spending in South Asia when modern jet fighters are parked on the runways of India and Pakistan while poor and homeless people are parked on their city pavements. He also counselled on the need to compare the ratio of soldiers to doctors in poor countries.

The landmark Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) that was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 2 April 2013, now regulates the international trade in conventional weapons including small arms, battle tanks, combat aircraft and warships. It recognises the gendered impact of the uncontrolled flow and widespread use of arms. Eighty two (82) states have ratified or acceded to the ATT including Japan as the only Asian country compared to four Pacific states (Australia, New Zealand, Samoa, Tuvalu). Of 53 signatories, there are 6 Asian states (Cambodia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia and Philippines) and 3 Pacific states (Kiribati, Nauru, Palau). The current rate of signature and ratification makes Asia the lowest of all the world's regions.¹⁴ For our communities' security and safety, we must push our governments to ratify the ATT.

Arms proliferation is also closely linked to the spread of militarism across the Pacific region with countries such as Fiji (1987, 2000, 2006), the Solomon Islands (2000), Papua New Guinea (gun running in the highlands) and Bougainville (1989-1999) having experienced armed violence and increased militarism in recent years. The Pacific remains one of the most militarized regions of the world where colonialism and militarism had worked hand in hand. Colonial powers tested nuclear weapons in the Marshalls (US),

¹² See <http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex> The SIPRI Database on Arms and Military expenditure covers 171 countries and contains data for the period since 1988.

¹³ Mahbub al Haq. 2004. 'Global Governance for Human Security' in <http://mhhdc.org/?p=74>

¹⁴ See Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) <http://www.pgaction.org/>

Christmas Is (UK) and Moruroa and Fangataufa (French Polynesia); the US operates a military base in Guam, while WW2 was fought in our jungles, shores, seas and airspace.

2.0. **Women's Leadership Role in Resisting War and Militarism: Experiences from the Field**

Women in countries and regions caught up in armed conflicts have differing scope and responses when organising for peace. Women are agents of change, silently working to rebuild their communities torn apart by war and conflict. While they possess vast leadership potential in promoting peace and security in their communities, women remain invisible in official peace talks and negotiations.

I now wish to highlight a few examples of how women in different parts of the world have claimed leadership roles to resist militarism, arms proliferation and war to help bring peace in their communities, and the world.

- **I ANSA Women's Network**¹⁵

Earlier on I had referred to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT, and wish to mention how privileged I was to be part of the IANSA Women's Network (WNK) that was involved throughout the UN process for an ATT from 2006 until its adoption by the UN in April 2013. IANSA WNK was formed in 2001 and focuses attention on the connections between gender, women's rights, small arms and armed violence. It links members in countries from all regions and continents working to reduce the humanitarian impacts of gun violence. Members successfully lobbied with other women's groups such as WILPF for the inclusion of **gender-based violence** (GBV) as a criterion in the Treaty text. While some of us would prefer a total ban on the arms trade, we had to contend with Article 7 (4) of ATT which mandates exporting states, to take into account the risk of the conventional arms under consideration being used to commit or facilitate acts of GBV or violence against women (VAW).¹⁶ IANSA WNK continues to work to reduce the humanitarian impacts of gun violence in our regions and urging governments to tighten arms regulations.

- **Women in Black (WiB) Movement**¹⁷

WiB is a world-wide network of women committed to actively opposing injustice, war, militarism and other forms of violence. Women experiencing these forms of violence in different ways in different regions of the world support each other by wearing black, and standing in a public place in silent, non-violent vigils carrying placards or handing out

¹⁵ See <http://www.iansa-women.org/about.html> for further information and how to become a member.

¹⁶ WILPF paper, 'Promoting Gender Equality in the implementation of the UN Arms Trade Treaty'

¹⁷ For further information see, <http://womeninblack.org/>

flyers. One of its lasting initiatives is the 'Thursdays in Black' campaign in which women wear black on Thursdays as a mark of peaceful protest against rape and sexual violence against women during wars and conflicts- such as the Bosnian wars and the Israeli-Palestine conflict. Now it is used as a form of protest against VAW in general.

WiB groups use other forms of non-violent direct action such as sitting down to block a road, entering military bases and other forbidden zones or refusing to comply with orders. Since wearing black signifies mourning in some cultures, it translates women's traditional mourning for the dead in war into a powerful protest against the injustice and senselessness of war.

- **Kup Women for Peace¹⁸ (Simbu province, Papua New Guinea)**

Closer to home in the Pacific, the Kup Women for Peace was established in 2000 with a mission to 'Daunim hevi bilong ol Mama' (reducing the sorrow of mothers). After almost 30 years of chronic tribal violence in the Kup region, Simbu Province of the central highlands of Papua New Guinea, women leaders from four warring clans decided "Enough is enough!" Putting aside tribal allegiances, they joined forces across the divide to address the culture of fear and violence resulting from tribal-fighting, deaths and associated gender-violence.

The Kup Women have had remarkable success both in stopping tribal fighting in the Kup region and in promoting peaceful development. They would travel into enemy villages and hold meetings with men from enemy tribes where they shared their stories of suffering and tears. Their accounts convinced the men to lay down their arms in exchange for self-led peaceful development.

A similar story of how Bougainville women, tired of the senseless violence and unnecessary loss of lives between warring factions in the 10 year civil war between 1989-1999, decided to march into the bushes to confront their male relatives to lay down their arms and spears. Mothers bared their breasts to remind the men about their moral authority as mothers who had nurtured them, to urge them to stop fighting. The approach ended with the ceremony of breaking of bows and spears to mark the end of warring and violence and signal the return to peace.

- **Women in Fiji – National Council of Women Peace vigil**

At the height of the Parliamentary hostage crisis during the military-civilian coup of May 2000 in Fiji, the Fiji National Council of Women organised peace vigils at the Anglican

¹⁸ see <https://www.oxfam.org.nz/what-we-do/where-we-work/papua-new-guinea/our-partners/kup-women-for-peace>

Church Cathedral during those dark early days, which provided a safe haven for the families of the hostages seeking solace and comfort, and being offered strength, love and support. The Council continues to solicit funds to hold capacity building/training on disarmament treaties such as the ATT so they can press the government to ratify or implement these agreements and to contribute to peace and security in the Pacific region. Quaker NZ has provided funds for a training workshop in Fiji this year.

- **CODEPINK¹⁹**

This is a women-led grassroots organization working to end U.S. wars and militarism, support peace and human rights initiatives, and redirect tax dollars from militarism into healthcare, education, green jobs and other life-affirming programs. **CodePink** has networks outside the US including Japan and they distinguish themselves by wearing pink, as you can see from our four Japanese sisters present here with us.

- **Million Mum March²⁰ (MMM)**

The Million Mom March grew out of the aftermath of a horrific shooting in California on August 10, 1999. A New Jersey mom, Donna Dees-Thomases, outraged by the gun violence illuminating from her living room television screen, started a website to rally moms together in protest. The moms aimed to carry their voices to Washington and ultimately gave birth to an overwhelming grassroots movement!

More than 750,000 moms and advocates took to the National Mall in Washington on Mother's Day, Sunday, May 14, 2000, something the country had not seen in decades. Joined by satellite marches in more than 70 cities across the United States, more than one million people spoke in one voice about the need to address the 31,000 people who die from gun violence every year. Politicians and celebrities also flocked to the event to join moms in their protest. Encouraged by this overwhelming response, the MMM has established active chapters across the US.

- **International Women's Network against Militarism**

In 1997, 40 women activists, policy makers, teachers and students from South Korea, Okinawa, mainland Japan, the Philippines, and continental USA gathered to share information and to strategize together about the negative effects of US military bases in their countries. Since then, women from Guam, Hawai'i, and Puerto Rico have joined. These women, some of whom are here today, work on similar issues: military violence against women/trafficking, ending impunity of US officers found guilty of rape or sexual

¹⁹ See <http://www.codepink.org/faqs> for further information.

²⁰For further information see, <http://www.bradycampaign.org/about-us-million-mom-march>

violence against women and girls; the appropriation of indigenous lands for the expansion of US military bases and operations, and health effects from the contaminated environments of nuclear testing programs or arms stockpiles in preparation for war.²¹

US military operations have continued in Okinawa, Guam, Hawaii, Jeju (South Korea) with risks of a return to the Philippines. Unarmed women struggle against the highly militarised and heavily armed operations of a world power. Margaret Mead the anthropologist once said, *"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."*²²

Conclusion

Women all over the world continue to expose the injustices of war, militarism and armed violence. They point to the violent masculinities that are sanctioned by societies to carry out such injustices. This week we will hear more stories about women's courage amidst the ravages of militarism and war in Mindanao and other parts of the Philippines, Japan and the region. Women are traumatised by the deaths of their loved ones, and bear the burden of emotional and socio-economic scars of violence. Many women become impoverished after the male breadwinners are killed. Yet across our region women use non-violence means to demand and claim back the peace that we and our families deserve.

We have academics and activists, youth and women attending this Conference. This is a powerful people's peace force that can change the course of our region's dynamics towards the peace that we dare to hope for. "Be the change that you wish to see in the world," said Mahatma Gandhi.

Another world is possible – a peaceful, non-violent world that women want our children to inherit.

I wish us all a successful and fruitful Conference this week.

Vinaka vakalevu: I thank you all.

²¹ <http://gwynkirk.com/organizing-and-activism/international-womens-network>

²² Read more at: <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/margaretme100502.html>