



CRIME

**Tenth
United Nations Congress
on the Prevention of Crime
and the Treatment of
Offenders**

Distr.: General
10 April 2000

English only

Vienna, 10 – 17 April 2000

Agenda item 6

**Offenders and victims: accountability and fairness
in the justice process**

**A BRIDGE FOR PEACE: MODELLING RESTORATIONAL
STEPS THAT CUT CYCLES OF CRIME AND WAR**

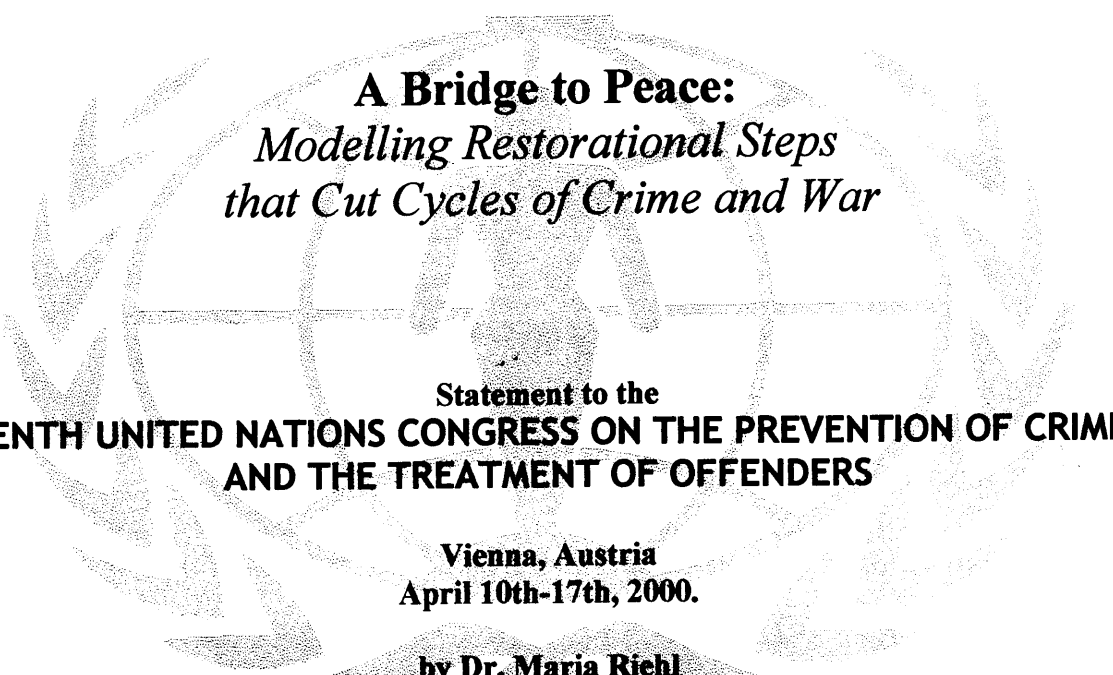
**Statement* submitted by the Women's Federation for World peace,
International (in general consultative status with the Economic and Social
Council).****

The Secretariat has received the attached statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 53/110 of 9 December 1998, paragraphs 5 and 11 of Assembly resolution 54/125 of 17 December 1999 and rule 60 of the provisional rules of procedure for United Nations congresses on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders (A/CONF.187/2).

* Distribution is limited in the quantities and languages in which the paper is made available to the United Nations.

** The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

“Crime and War”



A Bridge to Peace: *Modelling Restorational Steps that Cut Cycles of Crime and War*

**Statement to the
TENTH UNITED NATIONS CONGRESS ON THE PREVENTION OF CRIME
AND THE TREATMENT OF OFFENDERS**

**Vienna, Austria
April 10th-17th, 2000.**

**by Dr. Maria Riehl
on behalf of the
Women’s Federation for World Peace, International.**

Mr. President, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen :

Today we are becoming more and more aware that wars begin in the human mind and that wars are simply a “larger” version of crime, especially on the side of the aggressor.

A Cease Fire Is Not Enough To Create Lasting Peace

Centuries of experience and modern psychology are teaching us that a cease-fire alone is not enough to create lasting peace. Every act of violence leaves victims with physical but also deep emotional scars behind. War is an accumulation of acts of violence and therefore long after the external destruction has been restored the internal scars still linger on.

When emotions of hate and resentment are not restored, they are the source of conflict or even wars in the future. Fifty years after the end of World War II the *Women’s Federation for World Peace* started a unique initiative called the “Sisterhood Movement” or “Bridge of Peace” to end the resentments and hate accumulated during WW II and during other historical conflicts.

A New Social Technology

Through this new social technology, women who have the desire to create lasting peace and who have in mind the future world we bequeath our children and future generations, come together and unite as sisters crossing over the borderlines of enmity leaving the destructive past behind.

At such a *Bridge Ceremony* or *Sisterhood Ceremony*, two women from two previously warring or enemy nations or ethnic group come from either side of a symbolic bridge and,

walking towards each other, choose to turn from a history of conflict and misunderstanding. Before meeting, they bow to each other moving toward respect and acceptance of one another. They then embrace, taking steps to forge a new partnership as “sisters” working together to create a more peaceful world.

This public statement in a thoughtfully created environment, complete with music, makes this moment really historical. Deep emotions are often evoked as participants squarely face the realisation of how much suffering and misunderstanding there has been on both sides —those of the “victors” as well as the victims. Tears are common proof of the transforming experience that naturally flows from sincere: taking of responsibility; new-found respect; deep regret at any role played by themselves or associated others that violated the other; and the making of a new commitment to another person in a meaningful environment. Tears also mark the deep happiness and new hope felt through these unions.

Resolving Emotional Tragedies of War

Over 200,000 sister-couples were first forged between Korean and Japanese women in 1994 restoring the deep wounds of 40yrs of Japanese occupation that Korea suffered through before 1945. This was seriously needed healing for some of the Korean “comfort women” and their families. Then in 1995 and 1996, 20,000 more sister-pairs were made in the USA between American and Japanese women, many who had put their lives back together after losing loved ones in the war.

Europe picked up this idea and the first European Sisterhood Conference took place between Austrian and Tschec women in Vienna, April, 1995. Other countries followed this example. A **Bridge of Peace** was build between Germany and Poland, Germany and Russia; England and Ireland; Hungary and Slovakia; Japan and France; and Japan and England. In Austria we built the **Bridge** with six more of our neighbouring countries. Among these a Bridge Ceremony was held with ladies from Croatia and Bosnia shortly after their war had stopped. This became a most remarkable experience. At that time, a few days in the countryside of Austria where they received an open hearted “sister” became a substantial source of new hope!

What comes after these ceremonies? The **Bridge of Peace** is a very meaningful first step to forging partnerships for peace. How these relationships develop afterward vary greatly according to the individuals, their proximity (or lack of) and many other circumstances. Sometimes the relationship that develops may be as simple as a pen-pal type of friendship. Often, over the years, sisters visit one another, start projects together, or simply take something back to their homes from this ceremony that they did not previously have—a model for “restoring,” hurt, broken or violated relationships.

Four Key Elements of Restorational Relationships¹

This ceremony employs and underlines four main elements essential to establishing peaceful relationships:

1. **Responsibility:** We break the chains of victimization by first realizing that our resentments and anger are emotions that poison and debilitate ourselves and prohibit us from entertaining any other kind of thoughts and actions than those that sustain the anger and relive the reasons for resentment. Then, as we take the reins of responsibility and guide our thinking, speaking and actions beyond anger and resentment, (the trademarks of a victim,) we liberate ourselves from being a victim, even if our environment continues to seek to control our lives.

¹ *The Bridge of Peace: A New, Effective Social Technology for Healing the Wounds of Abuse, Misunderstanding, Intolerance, Prejudice and War.* Karen Judd Smith and Marily Morris, 1999. WFWP USA.

2. **Respect:** By recognizing the rights of the other, no matter who they are, we are able to open our minds up to the possibility of a solution. Without a foundation of respect, the only kind of relationship possible is that of “use and abuse” and so a perpetuation of the cycle of conflict.
3. **Regret & Renewal—A Personal Cease-fire:** As we take responsibility, we have the strength to see the things within ourselves that themselves possibly led to the abuse of others. So as not to perpetuate conflict in our own lives, we need to hold a personal “cease-fire” precipitated by self-awareness and honest assessment of our own actions.
4. **Commitment:** As we newly embrace our partner of peace, be they sister, spouse, friend or family member, we seal our personal commitment to one another and the task of self-development ahead.

Participants in the Ceremony therefore experience the transformational power of employing these “internal” skills. This potent model of restorative relationships is both an experience and a resource for those who experience it.

Protégés no longer, those who choose to utilise this new social technology take it with them to multiply this knowledge in their homes, their communities and even between nations.

Replacing “Don’t” with “How to”

As an individual actively chooses to understand restorative processes and initiate changes in themselves, their families and communities, so we are directly undermining the cycle of crime, conflict, resentment and justification for further crime and conflict. It is not enough to say, “No, this is wrong. Don’t fight. Don’t violate.” We have to show people *how* to do something that produces different, dramatic and real results that perpetuate cycles of healing, opportunity and development rather than crime and conflict.

As people explore and better understanding the opportunities created by “restorative” activities such as the **Bridge of Peace** new doors open for individuals, their families and even nations that draw on our innate creativity rather than destructive reactions.

Another key point is that participants of this initiative do not need any special training, degrees or education prior to participating in a ceremony—just a spark of awareness resulting in the willingness to personally contribute to a culture of peace and non-violence.

Addressing the Cause of Conflict in Domestic Violence, Crime and War

The **Bridge of Peace** continues today to be used where there are conflicts due to race and religion, ethnic difference, gender and generation differences. It is also, and most importantly, used to restore and strengthen humanity’s most elemental social relationship—the marriage partnership that gives birth to, cradles and houses humanity in its various states ranging from primitive² violence to enlightened interdependence.

Therefore, WFWP consistently seeks to address the issue of restoration at all levels including the need for the restoration of the most elemental (procreative) social relationship between man-woman, the health of which is key to the health of all our social systems. WFWP focuses on the marriage partnership in its role as model and progenitor of “violence or interdependence” for the generations and social structures that follow.

² “Primitive“ has nothing to do with technological development and everything to do with relational advancement. Some of the most primitive humans, unfortunately have access to much of today’s latest technology.