



**Women's Action for New Directions and the Women Legislators'
Lobby Support Ratification of the U.N. Convention on the
Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women**

June 13, 2002

Women's Actions for New Directions (WAND) and its program, the Women Legislators' Lobby (WiLL), applaud the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's decision to hold hearings on the United Nation's Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). WAND/WiLL strongly support the ratification of CEDAW, and urges the Senate to ratify this important human rights document.

WAND is a national, grassroots arms control & disarmament organization that has worked since 1980 to empower women to act politically to reduce violence and militarism, and to redirect excessive military resources toward unmet human and environmental needs. Since articles 7 and 8 of the treaty address equality of opportunity for women everywhere to engage in political and public life, WAND, whose mission begins "to empower women to act politically," enthusiastically supports this treaty because it will encourage the active and equal participation of women in government.

Violence against women is the most common human rights violation, taking many forms and cutting across ethnicity and socio-economic status. CEDAW is an important international tool to suppress violence and gender discrimination toward women. In fact, the treaty has persuaded governments in Turkey, Nepal, South Africa, and the Republic of Korea to develop laws that protect women from domestic violence.

The Women Legislators' Lobby (WiLL), a program of WAND, is a national multi-partisan network of women state legislators working together to influence federal policies that impact state and local communities. With members in all 50 states, WiLL members account for one-third of all women legislators and represent over 33 million citizens across the country. Because CEDAW is the only international instrument that comprehensively addresses women's rights within political, economic, cultural, and social spheres, it is a powerful tool in promoting and assessing women's equality. The Women Legislators' Lobby recognizes that until our nation ratifies CEDAW, the United States is constrained in its international promotion of women's emancipation. To highlight this point, legislators in 23 states have introduced resolutions urging U.S. ratification of CEDAW.

To date, 169 countries have ratified CEDAW. The United States stands alone as the only industrialized democracy that has not ratified the treaty. The United States' ratification of CEDAW will strengthen the treaty and will assure our nation's credibility. To encourage non-violence and peace, and to ensure women's political equality, Women's Action for New Directions and the Women Legislators' Lobby stand in solidarity with women worldwide in support of this important treaty.