WFWPI UN New York: Equalize the Veto Power of the Security Council

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The Security Council in session (UN Web TV)

New York - The Women's Federation for World Peace International has added its voice to the mounting call that all members of the Security Council must have veto powers, or none at all, for the sake of substantial peace.

Veto power must be democratized, said WFWPI Vice President and UN Relations Director Merly Barlaan and Amb. Mario de Leon Jr., WFWPI senior advisor for diplomacy.

Barlaan opined that the UN system is no longer serving its original founding purpose mainly because of the foundational disagreement of the P5 and the founding countries, and thus must be restructured. To change the P5 means to change the UN Charter, she said.

"When the UN was founded, there was a unipolar world. Now, it is multipolar. That's why we in civil society need to chart our own path in terms of exploring ways we can salvage whatever space we have in the diplomatic decorum. Changing mindset and changing the system is the key by addressing the root causes of conflict and highlighting the role and power of women to build peace through healing, forgiveness, interdependence, mutual prosperity and shared universal values - are new paradigms and pathways to a peaceful future. A future without war."

The five permanent members of the Security Council - US, China, Russia, France, and the United Kingdom - have veto power, under Art. 27 of the UN Charter. The 10 other member states (elected by the General Assembly every two years) have a non-permanent status that has no veto power.

Historically, the veto power to block a decision made by other members of the council was created due to the failed experience of the League of Nations, where every member state had veto power, creating

absolute gridlock.

At the Dumbarton Oaks Conference and the Yalta Conference in 1944 and 1945, respectively, the US, UK, USSR, China, and France mulled their veto power framework.

Smaller nation members strongly protested the veto power during the 1945 San Francisco Conference, arguing that it undermined sovereign equality. The US gave a take-it-or-leave-it ultimatum to the smaller nations, contending that the major countries would not be allowed to ratify a treaty by their respective senates without their veto powers. In order to forge a global security alliance, the smaller nations conceded to allow the veto power of the major countries.

Eighty-one years later, substantial peace has remained unachievable, with members of the P5 accused of instigating major wars themselves.



Retired Philippine Ambassador Mario de Leon Jr. and Merly Barlaan with UN youth representatives of WFWPI.

Amb. de Leon Jr. offered a procedural solution to equalize the Security Council votes. De Leon is a senior advisor on diplomacy for the Women's Federation for World Peace International.

"The member states have to find an interlocutor among the 10 non-permanent members of the Security Council. It has to be part of the agenda of SC. Too bad, the Philippines lost its bid. It would have been easier to have requested the Philippine delegation to do it for us. Another approach is to have a new resolution adopted in the UNGA so that it's easier to have the Security Council take it as an agenda."

The vetopower of the P5 has been criticized as having institutionalized impunity and made the Security Council powerless to honor declarations and commitments.

"In the spirit of UNGA 81 - 'Restoring Trust, Managing Transformation: A UN That Delivers for All' - reforming the exercise of the P5 veto can strengthen accountability and restore the Security Council's capacity to translate international declarations and commitments into decisive action," said Barlaan.