

MINUTES OF WAF NATIONAL CONVENTION
HELD AT ISLAMABAD ON THE 21ST & 22ND DECEMBER 1990

1. PARTICIPANTS:

- Karachi: Kauser S.K., Anis Haroon, Tehmina Ahmed, Nuzhat Kidvai, Kulsoom Marvi, Tahira Chaudhary
- Lahore: Nighat Saeed, Fareeha Zafar, Samina Rehman, Rubina Saigol
- Islamabad: Fauzia Saeed, Shahnaz Rashid, Khalida Manzoor, Sameena Ayaz, Tahira Abdullah, Noreen Mahmood, Asma Sufi, Samina Ahmed, Aroona Kamal, Sara Tirmazi, Nasreen Azhar, Nasim Zehra, Seema Pervez, Nageen Hyatt

2. INTRODUCTION:

The convention opened with introduction of all the delegates, followed by each chapter outlining their chapter activities for the previous year. The 2 day agenda was reviewed and amendments etc. made. See Appendix A (original Agenda).

3. INTERNAL POLICY ISSUES:

a) Working Committee Eligibility

Lahore & Karachi took the position that members of the W.C. shall cease to hold office if they become Prime Ministers, Ministers, MNAs or MPAs of the ruling party or attain positions of office holders in their own party. Islamabad felt this ban should be extended to include all MNAs & MPAs and office bearers of all political parties whether in power or not. All chapters to go back to their General Body members and explain both positions and report back.

b) Acceptance of Tickets by WAF

- Another lengthy debate took place on the following issues :
- Are tickets & per diem (for both internal & international travel) part of funding ?
 - Is the above a national policy issue ?

A consensus could not be reached, so it was decided that acceptance of tickets was a chapter issue as had been in the past. Lahore decided that no tickets of any kind will be accepted. Karachi felt that tickets can be accepted, but all invitations to go to the W.C. to decide who will go. Islamabad's G.B. had approved the acceptance of tickets.

c) Sub-Committees

There was a discussion on the issue of what should be the status of WAF sub-committees. This was specially in the light of WAR, which was initially a sub-committee of WAF, but now has become a separate organisation with a cross-section of membership. Lahore pointed this to be a dangerous precedent from WAF's perspective. However, it was explained that this was in fact a healthy trend and should be encouraged. Lahore WAR sub-committee also objected to not being informed by WAR Karachi that they were going independent. Karachi WAR explained that their membership comprised of both men and women, the majority of whom were not members of WAF. In a large meeting it was decided that WAR would establish itself as an independent organisation, registering itself and also start accepting funding. Karachi WAF was informed of this decision and the W.C. had no objections.

Lahore WAR was placed in a dilemma whether to continue under the same name as a sub-committee of WAF or adopt a separate name. It was suggested and decided that all sub-committees of WAF would have no separate names as such. If they decide to become independent organisations (which was a good sign) they would then clearly have a new name.

d) Evaluation of WAF

Lahore suggested a WAF chapterwise-evaluation or rather an assessment or review first and then leading into a national one. It was suggested that in this exercise of internal assessment we should get the feedback of other individuals (non-members) and other organisations view of WAF. It should also be a consciousness raising exercise at the same time. We should try and complete this before the next convention i.e September '91 which will be ten years of WAF.

e) WAF Charter & Statement of Demands

There were various amendments suggested to the above. See Appendix B. These have to be presented to each chapter's G.B. for endorsement.

f) Role of Observers at the National Convention

There was again confusion around this issue. The presence of a G.B. member as an observer taking notes caused both Karachi and Lahore chapters to feel quite perturbed. Islamabad explained its position that it had kept the first three sessions open to G.B. members as silent observers only, with the final session being open to all. It was pointed out that whereas in the last convention in Karachi the Lahore delegates had a similar position as Islamabad on G.B. members participation, its present delegates did not agree and objected to observers presence in "closed" sessions. Karachi however still maintained its position of having no observers in such sessions. It was further pointed out by Islamabad that since no clear consensus had been reached on this issue, each hostess chapter was outlining its own

format. Islamabad finally agreed that there would be no observers in the closed sessions of the convention. Furthermore, it was also agreed that the delegates should preferably only comprise of W.C. members, who would have trashed out chapter positions on all agenda items in advance. This would help towards minimizing last minute confusion/conflict between W.C. members and G.B. members who are not so familiar with the chapter positions.

4. ISSUES FOR ACTION:

a) Representation of Women in Assemblies & Senate

WAF's position on the above was outlined by Lahore. Primarily WAF has suggested 3 stages with attendant conditions. See Appendix B, Statement of Demands No. 17.

b) Development

Islamabad strongly emphasized that WAF needed to channelise its efforts and energies in politicising development issues - Education, Health, Employment etc., in its capacity as a pressure cum lobby cum consciousness raising organisation. Lahore suggested looking at development at two levels :

- i) Political Economy - development and its implications for women
- ii) Concrete demands - development issues concerning different urban rural classes.

Islamabad further suggested discussing and understanding at the conceptual level, different development models concerning women and essential differences among them, for instance Women In Development (WID) and Gender And Development (GAD).

c) Legislation

The Shariat Bill was considered by all as an ongoing issue around which to continue lobbying and mobilising. WAF's position on the bill was discussed. Some were of the opinion that WAF should now openly take a secular stand clearly demanding the separation of state and religion, while other felt that this was not strategically correct as it would marginalise and isolate WAF and reduce its chances of broadening its base, specially among grass roots women. At the end it was concluded that WAF is against any form of the Shariat Bill.

d) Women's University

The issue has again raised its head after being in cold storage for quite a while. It was felt that to have a separate women's university teaching only "domestic" disciplines of no market or technical value was a ploy by the government to keep women technically backward with little or no marketable skills. Divorcing higher education at university level from viable employment was going a disservice to women. Besides such a university was a waste of resources, specially if the university was to

be located in Lahore. If such a proposal was to be implemented then either one of the colleges should be upgraded or the univ. set up in a smaller town, offering technical subjects. It was pointed that there is already substantial underutilization of existing infrastructure of schools, colleges, universities and scarce resources and funds should not be wasted on new infrastructures.

e) Plans for 1991

Lahore will hold the next convention around end of October. It was suggested to build up activities leading to the convention. The convention would coincide with a WAF mela celebrating 10 years of WAF. Skits, documentaries, films etc would be presented. All the women's organisations would be represented and asked to put up their stalls. All chapters to closely coordinate to make it a success.

5. CLOSING SESSION

The last session was an open session to all. A representative from each chapter outlined the issues discussed at the closed sessions. Resolutions were read out on the following :

- i) Presidential Ordinances
- ii) Shariat Bill
- iii) Women's University