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Ms. Magazine  
119 W. 40th St.  
New York, NY 10018  
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Dear Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo:

This is an initial invitation to explore your interest in and schedule availability for attending what we hope and believe will be a very special international women's meeting. The Sisterhood Is Global Strategy Meeting is a small-scale international women's seminar planned for November 12-18, in the United States, as a step toward developing a high-expertise, practical, and cross-cultural global strategy for women's equality, and to create specific, autonomously developed pragmatic tactics focused for presentation through National Delegations and Non-Governmental Organizations at the U.N. World Conference on Women to be held in Nairobi, Kenya in the Summer of 1985--and beyond.

The Strategy Meeting will reflect and further the growing global Women's Movement--an already influential movement which will have even greater political impact throughout the end of the 20th Century and the whole of the 21st. A new consciousness about the vast resource of womanpower--more than half the human species--is evident in a proliferation of statements of concern, plans of action, legislative reforms, and other blueprints for change being put forward by national governments, international congresses and agencies, multinational corporations, and cross-cultural progressive movements. That consciousness includes the nascent realization that "women's politics" may well be the politics of the 21st Century, in that "women's issues" address not only equal human rights but also are central to the major areas of concern to all nations: women and children suffer the most from hunger, non-literacy, health, population, refugee, and rural-to-urban-migration problems; women traditionally have been concerned with the preservation of the planet's natural resources, and opposed to the armaments race; women constitute a vast--and unempowered--labor force, and suffer from "GNP invisibility." Yet the policy makers addressing all these problems are very rarely women.



Repeatedly, there has emerged (at international conferences and in smaller contexts) an expressed need for work toward a truly women-defined global strategy for women, a networking not only of persons and groups (which already flourishes) but a developing and networking of ideas and tactics, for use in governmental politics as well as in grassroots activism, both within countries and regions and across those boundaries. A great deal of activism already exists, and is hearteningly on the increase, but certain actions or tactics can flounder, tend to "reinvent the lightbulb," or even have a deleterious backlash effect on women in other regions--simply because no attempts are being made in a sensitized, concerted fashion toward building an international feminist strategy. Misunderstanding, frustrations, and antagonisms generated or exacerbated by such a lack of strategy were distressingly common at the 1975 U.N. Women's Conference in Mexico City, the 1980 U.N. Mid-Decade Conference in Copenhagen, and the 1981 Development Strategy for the Third U.N. Decade meetings. Nor have these difficulties been solved by "top-down" solutions (often devised, in however a well-meaning fashion, by the very decision makers responsible in part for the problems themselves).

In numerous conversations and correspondences with Sisterhood Is Global Contributors, a need was conceived for a "think-tank" seminar to take place in 1984, consisting primarily of twenty-five of the women who already share a context and "sense of family" via their involvement as contributors to the anthology. The aim would be toward concretizing women's approaches for a global strategy, focused on the U.N. 1985 Women's Conference in Nairobi, and beyond. Although it would indeed have been fruitful to convene a meeting large enough to include all of the remarkable contributors to the anthology, space, time, and funding requirements necessitate limiting the number. Twenty-five is a more workable number for the intimate, brainstorming, "think-tank" atmosphere of this particular gathering. Furthermore, it permits the Strategy Meeting to invite Participants of special expertise and influence in the areas of national government infrastructure (planning, policy, and implementation levels), and regional impact (international alliances, organizations, and agencies)--as well as local operations (grassroots organizing tactics, health, population, and education programs, projects which will be effective within differing cultural and political communities). Although many of these invited Participants have served or currently are serving in official capacities, all have repeatedly demonstrated the ability to take courageous, committed, and innovative stands independent of those roles. These women, yourself included, have been invited with these varied types of expertise in mind, as well as for such other considerations as regional, developing/developed nation-status, and cultural/ethnic/religious balance. Obviously, the majority of the Participants will be from Third World nations (reflecting the global population). The tentative list of invited Participants, with a short biographical background on each, is attached; all are article contributors to the anthology Sisterhood Is Global.

## The Strategy Meeting Focus

The Meeting would concentrate on priority issues of concern to women globally, and on creative strategies for dealing with such issues. Such initiatives would attempt to transcend assumptions of fixed national antagonisms and fatigued "top-down" programs which too frequently dissolve into politicking or mere unworkability. Instead, these strategies would attempt to embrace women's tactics useful in legislative and electoral drives as well as those necessary in situations of disenfranchisement, displacement, or warfare; those possible where sophisticated news media constitute valuable tools of communication and those where nonliteracy is high or where no independent press exists; those where religious institutions loom as obstacles to women's freedom, and those where religious ritual acts as "code" for women to express individual rebellion with a modicum of safety; those workable in industrialized nations where the "feminization of poverty" is on the increase and in Third World nations where poverty--and its "femalization"--already has been a harsh reality for a long time. Redefinitions of "technology" and "development" are central to such discussions--e.g., the often criticized current use (and misuse) of advanced technology with regard to "integrating" women into predefined development programs versus a more original, women-oriented "user context" emphasis regarding appropriate technology, and women-conceived more effective grassroots means of accomplishing culturally organic, egalitarian development for all the people in a given country.

The Strategy Meeting could issue a Position Paper containing concrete, original proposals which respect the myriad differences in women's status worldwide but gain effectiveness through sensitivity to the similarities in women's global condition; fresh approaches which governments, the U.N., NGOs, and independent feminists alike can recognize as being common denominators to specific problems; approaches which consequently will be accessible, acceptable, and adaptable in promoting progressive change.

The Agenda will be further developed and focused through circulating drafts in correspondence between the Strategy Meeting staff and the invited Participants during the months preceding the Meeting.

## The Strategy Meeting Schedule

As now planned, the Participants would be arriving during the weekend of November 10/11, to be met and escorted to accommodations at a conference center outside but in the environs of New York City. An informal private reception would take place Sunday evening. The Strategy working sessions would begin Monday morning, and continue through Friday until noon, with appropriate lunch and dinner breaks, and the evenings available for night sessions, regional caucuses if desired, etc. Each morning, the facilitators/rapporteurs would present copies of a summation of the germinal points arrived at in the previous day's session, for checks and/or revisions by all Participants, and toward the drafting of the possible Position Paper.

69 On Friday, the Participants would be driven to New York City accommodations. That evening (Nov. 16), they would attend a formal reception celebrating the publication of the Sisterhood Is Global anthology to which they contributed. The following morning (Saturday, Nov. 17), at a major press conference, they would mutually present such a Position Paper based on findings developed by the previous week's meetings. The remainder of Saturday, all of Sunday, and possibly Monday, those Participants who agreed to do so would be available for meetings with United Nations and United States representatives (Congressional representatives, and officials from international agencies and foundations concerned with global women's issues). Some of the Participants might also, if they were willing, be appearing during this time at a few select panels or forums under the aegis of a consortium of Women's Studies programs in the Metropolitan area (e.g., Hunter, Barnard, NYU, CCNY, and Rutgers); President Donna Shalala of Hunter College has been most supportive in expressing her willingness to coordinate this aspect of the visit. The Participants would be departing on Sunday evening or Monday, unless their own personal plans required otherwise.

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The above schedule has been developed to strike a balance of two factors: (1) the vital need for uninterrupted time together in a quiet and warm ambiance--imperative for the development of mutual candor and the creativity necessary for "brainstorming" to forge genuinely fresh and effective strategies, and (2) a more public accessibility of and information exchange with the Participants, requested by concerned feminists and international experts in the United States.

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#### Post-Meeting Follow-Up

The Strategy Meeting follow-up will include the disbursement of the Position Paper through already expressedly receptive channels in the United Nations System, through Women's Bureaus of the Participants' own countries, as well as international press, women's organizations, or other channels to be mutually agreed up, etc.

Follow-up will also involve post-Meeting evaluation (by the Participants, observers, and Meeting supporters), and the evolution of a format for whatever plans, policies, etc., require continuing contact.

A number of such possibilities for continuance have already been proposed (by some of the invitees themselves and/or by others concerned with the U.N. Nairobi Conference or international affairs in general). These include:



--The continuation of the Strategic Group, and its expansion, through regional meetings, toward the establishment of a permanent Institute of International Women's Affairs. Such an Institute could serve as an ongoing center for the further development of theory, strategy, and policy regarding equalization of the status of women nationally, regionally, and globally--in somewhat the fashion of a women's "Club of Rome" or the new Third World political think-tank, the "Club of Dakar." It could also establish fellowships for women scholars in such areas as socioeconomic development, policy implementation, and effective organizing/lobbying/legislative/media techniques. It might engender such needed and useful concepts as an International Women's Legal Resource Center, which would house a library of every nation's civil and penal codes with particular details on those laws specifically affecting women, and which could monitor changes in legislation and publish a bulletin to that effect, thus informing policy-makers, international-affairs scholars, and concerned women all over the world as to their own and other women's legal status (and alerting us all as to which pending legislation to lobby for--or against).

--Pursue formal classification as an International Non-Governmental Organization with Consultative Status to the United Nations.

--Continue and broaden formal networking alliances for the disbursement of the first Strategy Meeting's Position Paper, with particular emphasis on its having impact on the 1985 U.N. Conference in Nairobi, and beyond.

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### Current Status of the Project

We are presently involved in fundraising for the Meeting, and, although we already have a major commitment from the Ford Foundation and smaller commitments from other foundations. We will know definitely by early July whether or not full funding support will be available to bring about this, I believe, historic meeting.

In the interim, however, I wanted to send this initial invitation to you, so that you might let me know about your interest in and availability for attending the Meeting. Should we meet our budgetary requirements--which are considerable, since they entail travel fares and all accommodations, meals, etc., for Participants--final confirmation Invitations will be sent toward the beginning of July.

Could you, then, please let me know as early as possible as to your interest in and time-schedule availability for attending the Strategy Meeting? We are asking that Participants commit themselves for the period of the Meeting itself through the Saturday, Nov. 17 press conference, i.e., through midday Nov. 17 at a minimum--in order to ensure enough time for real, groundbreaking strategizing and in order to present our findings publicly in full solidarity. It would indeed be wonderful if the majority of Participants were able to stay the

weekend as well, to participate in the congressional meetings, university forums, etc, but this is optional. The attached question sheet for your convenience will give us an idea of your availability. I'd be grateful if it were returned to me at the above address by June 30.

Please let me add my deep hope that you will both want and be able to come. Given the pressures we face, so very little time is ever allotted for creative, free, strategic "brainstorming" by committed international women's rights activists--and this seems to be such a rare, precious, and possibly major chance to do precisely that. We on this end will do everything imaginable to create an ambiance which is warm, relaxed, genuinely sisterly, and fostering of the pragmatic, culturally sensitive, and idealistic women-devised tactics which I am confident will emerge.

I look forward to your response with great eagerness, and send my respect, affection, and support, as ever.

In global sisterhood,

  
Robin Morgan

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\_\_\_\_\_ I do wish to participate in the Sisterhood Is Global Strategy Meeting, and can make a commitment to attend the full week of closed-session meetings, the Saturday press conference, and the weekend activities (at least one university forum or congressional meeting, etc.).

\_\_\_\_\_ I do wish to participate in the Sisterhood Is Global Strategy Meeting, and can make a commitment to attend the full week of closed-session meetings through the Saturday press conference; however, I will not be able to participate in any of the other activities after midday Nov. 17.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will be unable to participate in the Sisterhood Is Global Strategy Meeting at all.

Because of our time constraints, if you will be at another address for an extended time over the summer, please list it below (with phone number and dates) so that we will be able to reach you easily with any information regarding the Strategy Meeting.

Please return to: Robin Morgan  
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