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## WIDE ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2008 PRESS RELEASE

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### **The financial Crisis shows Feminists were right all along!**

The 2008 WIDE Annual Conference entitled: "Feminist Visions for a Just Europe" was held in The Hague, The Netherlands, between October 9th to 11th. This year's conference was hosted by WO=MEN, the Dutch Gender Platform.

The Conference gathered 200 feminist activists, academics, experts and gender equality professionals providing a unique opportunity for alliance building, strategising and collective action between feminist advocates from different countries in the world.

The Conference was held in the shadow of the current financial crisis. To feminist gathered at the Conference, the crisis does not come as a surprise. Most feminists have been very clear in their critique of the neo-liberal economic policies including the deregulation that have led to the current crisis. These policies have had, and will continue to have, detrimental impact on the lives and livelihoods of women all over the world.

As pointed out by Ewa Charkiewicz from the Feminist Think Thank, it is shocking to see how governments in Europe and elsewhere have quickly mobilised billions and billions of Euros and dollars to bail out banks and provide guarantees for corporate players -while at the same time they have been reluctant to allocate money for addressing the world's food crisis. Women make up 70 % of the world's poor and are thus severely affected by the food crisis.

In the many different sessions the WIDE Annual Conference focused on: development policy, trade, migration, peacekeeping, feminisation of labor, and decent work policy.

The Conference reflected on the role of different feminisms in the struggle for an alternative Europe. Feminisms are diverse and feminists around the world face different challenges and realities. EU policy impacts women both within and outside Europe. The Conference's aim was to strengthen synergies amongst feminist individuals and organisations struggling for gender equality and social justice for women in, within and outside Europe.

Brid Brennan from the Netherlands warned against the serious threats that the EU's new policy of migration poses to the rights of migrants. Kinga Lohmann from Poland stated that, despite positive achievements, the impact of the EU enlargement process on genuine improvements of women's status was far from satisfactory. According to Lohmann, the European Neighborhood Policy is very weak in contributing to gender equality. Nicola Bullard from Thailand regretted that there is a weak gender analysis in the policy debates around climate change.

Above all, this conference underlined the need to continue with the important contributions feminists can make in shaping a better world with fewer structural inequalities. Wendy Harcourt, WIDE Chair, stated: "*WIDE will continue to do critical analysis, and keep on building the capacity of women. It is important to work on development from a feminist perspective, to be included in the trade debate, and to exchange different experiences in order to understand how we can respond better. After this conference, we should continue our debate in order to foster developing alternatives for a more just world.*"

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*For further information around the Conference please contact; WIDE, Bénédicte Allaert, benedicte[at]wide-network.org, WO=MEN, Zairah Khan, zkhan[at]wo-men.nl.*

*WIDE is a European network of women's organisations, development NGOs, gender specialists and human rights activists. WIDE monitors and influences international economic and development policy and practice from a feminist perspective. WIDE's work is grounded on women's rights as the basis for the development of a more just and democratic world order. See for more: [www.wide-network.org](http://www.wide-network.org). One can find Conference presentations at the site.*

*WO=MEN (pronounced women equals men), The Dutch Gender Platform, is a network of men and women, individuals and organizations, mostly based in the Netherlands. By bringing people together and creating awareness on gender equality as a fundamental right, we have committed ourselves to equal participation of women and men worldwide. You can join our struggle by becoming a member or a subscriber to our online resources at [www.wo-men.nl](http://www.wo-men.nl)*