

# A Vibrant Meeting of 1,300 Mothers in Paris – Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the World Mothers Movement



The UNESCO Convention Hall in Paris was not only lit in extraordinarily bright red, orange and yellow colours, but it also vibrated from the talk and laughter of around 1,300 women, most of them mothers, at the end of March. They came from over 50 countries, convening for two days in order to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the World Mothers Movement / Mouvement Mondiale des Meres (MMM).



This non-governmental organization was founded in 1974, with the support of UNESCO, by mothers who wanted to contribute to making and safeguarding peace in their countries, particularly after the atrocities and suffering of the Second World War. MMM has the highest consultative status at the United Nations. Most women at this meeting represented local non-governmental organizations, with a total of 6 million mothers.

This 60th anniversary congress, under the motto 'Mothers Work for Peace', offered a unique opportunity for MMM members, the French public and the international community to listen and learn from research, projects and individual examples. They witnessed panel discussions and testimonies about the many ways the World's mothers are involved in peace work: by educating their children to solve conflicts in a productive and respectful manner, addressing violence in their home towns and communities, managing social conflicts at their work places, and contributing to a fair balance in national and international affairs. Many presentations moved the participants' hearts and minds, and stimulated lively discussions in the hallways, during lunch and dinner, and in the evenings. A spirit of solidarity was very tangible, to the point that the plenary spontaneously collected money for the foundation of additional nurseries in Kinshasa, so that mothers can go to work in order to sustain their families, in the absence of male breadwinners, knowing that their children will be well cared for in their absence.

The panellists came up with numerous proposals on how mothers can achieve

more recognition and influence in all matters that affect the well-being of families, communities, nations and their interrelations, in a spirit of peaceful collaboration and respect for nature. Among them were suggestions to offer parenting education for students in schools as well as for young fathers and mothers, introducing a parenting diploma, etc. Mothers should have seats in all local, national and international representative bodies that develop local and economic policies. Their work needs to be acknowledged, investigated and documented in national surveys. They should also be able to benefit from a mothers' pension fund, as has been established in Italy.

Many congress attendees thought that mothers have a special role to play in light of the ever-intensifying global, regional and local conflicts of our present time. By their very nature, they are life-preserving and supporting, and not aggressive and destructive. MMM Lebanon was founded after the previous congress in Beirut in 2003. Maybe it is time for Jordan to think of having its own chapter of the World Movement of Mothers...