

World's women stake their

By Jacklyn Cock

The World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet, held in Miami from November 8 to 12, brought together over a thousand women from 90 different countries.

It was one of the meetings to prepare for the Earth Summit in Brazil next June when heads of state from around the world will attend and develop an Earth Charter to regulate economic development and environmental protection for the planet. The World Women's Congress aimed to ensure that the Earth Charter has "a women's dimension".

The predominant emphasis of the congress was on the linkages between the global economic and environmental crises. The major sessions featured a panel of five women judges (from India, Sweden, Australia, Kenya and Guyana) to hear testimony from diverse women ranging from Wangari Maathai, founder of the Green Belt movement in Kenya speaking on deforestation, to Rosalie Bertell from Canada talking on the threat of nuclear power and weapons to public health and the environment.

The congress exploded a powerful myth: that the military protects and defends us.

The reality, numerous women insisted, is that the military is the greatest single threat to security. As Rosalie Bertell said, "it is the military who are destroying the earth and they are doing it in the name of 'national security'. The main source of environmental destruction is 'the smart bombs, not aerosol deodorants'".

Three other themes emerged from the wealth of papers, films and talks presented: the first is that globally women are the shock absorbers of environmental problems. It is women who deal directly with the resource base, who, for example, gather wood and carry water in rural areas. It is mainly women who struggle to grow crops on eroded land and who are responsible for food preparation. The main victims of environmental degradation are underprivileged people and the majority of these are women.

The second theme is that increasingly it is women who are providing the energy and commitment to address environmental problems. But as Peggy Antrobus from the University of Barbados stressed, while women are cleaning up the mess at the local level, they are largely excluded from the institutions which create the mess in the first place. So the third theme was the political empow-

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Dr Jacklyn

The 'double shift' taking its

By Ida Gartrell

With high hopes and great determination, Eshwe Child and Family Welfare launched Idasa's "Women in a New South Africa"

workshops as part of a women's rights project in August. Four workshops later (that's



The end of that first workshop, "The Double Shift" was everyone determined to com-

and want commit