



Submission to the High Commissioner's call for inputs on 'Civil society space in multilateral institutions'

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1. Introduction

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) has positively noted the Human Rights Council's commitment to address the shrinking space for civil society in previous resolutions on civil society space.¹ We welcome the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) report "Practical recommendations for the creation and maintenance of a safe and enabling environment for civil society, based on good practices and lessons learned",² and, in particular, the recommendation therein to include a gender perspective and conduct gender impact-assessments in all proposed legislative and policy reforms.³ WILPF supports the five key elements set out by the High Commissioner as necessary to create and maintain a safe and enabling environment.⁴

In preparing this submission, WILPF drew from the findings of a three-day Convening it organised in April 2017 in good part as a reaction to the increasing obstacles for women's meaningful participation in the UN system. More than 150 women's rights and peace activists from 40 countries

¹ The most recent resolution being UN Index A/HRC/RES/32/31 of 20 July 2016 on civil society space, and A/HRC/RES/27/31 of 26 September 2014 on civil society space, and A/HRC/RES/24/21 of 27 September 2013 on civil society space: creating and maintaining, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling environment

² UN Index A/HRC/32/20 of 11 April 2016

³ UN Index A/HRC/32/20 of 11 April 2016, paragraph 87 d)

⁴ UN Index A/HRC/32/20 of 11 April 2016

gathered to discuss how to make the UN more inclusive and help it live up to the founding principles of its Charter. Two booklets providing an overview of the main findings and recommendations from that gathering are available as annexes to this submission.⁵

Women civil society's meaningful participation in multilateral institutions (hereafter referred to as "meaningful participation" in the context of this submission only) is firmly rooted in international law and numerous international instruments; yet it remains an overlooked component for sustainable peace and addressing root causes of conflict and violence.

For WILPF "meaningful participation" is about ensuring that women civil society organisation can engage based on their experience and expertise. It requires removing on-going obstacles to participation to enable women to speak for themselves, rather than be spoken for. It is not just about counting women—rather, it is about making women count. It requires promoting a women's human rights agenda in all multilateral fora.

Expanding the understanding of a "safe and enabling environment"

This WILPF submission focuses on the invaluable contribution and the participation of women civil society in the work of multilateral organisations, including UN bodies, agencies, funds and programmes, in efforts to advance peace and security. It calls on the UN to adopt a more comprehensive notion of indispensable pre-conditions necessary for an enabling environment, specifically for women civil society actors, to meaningfully participate in multilateral institutions. The factors that we address, such as arms proliferation, militarisation of society and austerity measures, create obstacles to women civil society actors' meaningful participation in decision-making and in multilateral processes and institutions. For this reason, these are factors that need to be included in a more comprehensive definition of a 'safe and enabling environment'.

The submission addresses restrictions faced at specifically the national level or the international level, and restrictions arising at both the national and international level. A major restriction at all levels is the lack of recognition of women's expertise. Restrictions at the national level addressed in this submission are: the lack of recognition of women's expertise; the distinct and threats faced by women human rights defenders, including in the context of corporate abuse; the lack of sustained and flexible core funding to women civil society actors; militarisation; the impact of austerity measures on women; and the stigmatisation of peace activists. At the international level, we have identified restrictions for women civil society actors to be physically present in multilateral fora, and restrictions to access information.

It is imperative and an obligation for multilateral fora to include civil society in all decision-making processes.⁶ Various, UN bodies, including human rights bodies, and instruments have emphasised the

⁵ Booklet No. 2: "How UN Agencies and Programmes can ensure Women's meaningful Participation in their work" (2017). Booklet No. 3: "What Member States can do to ensure Women's meaningful Participation in the UN System" (2017).

⁶ This is highlighted by the Human Rights Council and OHCHR and the cited human rights framework UN Index A/HRC/32/20 of 11 April 2016: see paragraph 12: such as the right to freedom of opinion and expression and to peaceful assembly and association and the right to participate in public affairs, together with the principle of non-discrimination. These rights are guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (arts. 19, 21, 22 and 25); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (arts. 8 and 15); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (art. 3); the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (art. 5); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (arts. 13 and 15); the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (arts. 21, 29 and 30); the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (art. 24); and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (art. 26)."See also paragraph 14, *ibid*: The European Court of Human Rights has consistently supported civil

need to include women civil society actors at all levels and stages of decision-making fora.⁷ It is high time that effective measures be taken to give effect to those recommendations.

2. General barriers to women civil society actors' participation in multilateral institutions and processes

Recognise women as experts of their own national contexts

When women from grassroots organisations participate in multilateral fora, they are often not meaningfully included as knowledge providers or experts.⁸ Their inclusion in peace and mediation processes and post-conflict reconstruction efforts is often tokenistic.

Women's participation is at times met with stereotypical expectations, not only by actors at the national level but also from the international community, such as UN staff in UN agencies and UN country teams. Whilst WILPF and partners have been able to count on many UN staff and diplomats that are genuine proponents of women's meaningful inclusion, some diplomats in Yemen for

society's role in bringing matters of public interest to open debate (Steel and Morris v. United Kingdom, application No. 68416/01, judgment of 15 February 2005).

Moreover, Rio Principle 10 commits states to supporting inclusive public participation, access to justice, and public information concerning the environment. See UN Index A/CONF.151/26, Principle 10. Agenda 2030 calls for "partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society" to implement and monitor the Sustainable Development Goals. And the Women, Peace and Security Agenda affirms the importance of women's participation in peace processes (UNSCR 1325), recognises civil society contributions (UNSCR 2106 (OP 11) and calls for action to consult with civil society (UNSCR 1889 (OP 10); UNSCR 2122 (OP 7(a)) and engage with civil society in creating solutions (UNSCR 1880 (OP 10)

⁷ These include:

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions (UNSCR 1820 of 2008, UNSCR 1888 of 2009; UNSCR 1889 of 2010; UNSCR 1960 of 2011; UNSCR 2106 of 2013; UNSCR 2122 of 2011); UNSCR 2242 of 2015 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations.

CEDAW General Recommendations 8, 23,30 (UN Index A/52/38 on political and public life; UN Index CEDAW/C/GC/30)

The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing; and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its emphasis on gender equality, specifically with respect to SDG 5.5: "Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life". See also paragraphs 20 and 35.

The Women Peace and Security Global study reiterates women's fundamental role to secure peace and sets out key recommendations to ensure women's meaningful participation in multilateral fora and beyond. (UN Women (2015), Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace. A Global Study on the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, available at: [http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20\(1\).pdf](http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf))

The 2017 factual summary of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons emphasised the importance of the equal participation of women and men in nuclear disarmament, with the NPT summary encouraging states parties to actively support participation of female delegates in their own NPT delegations and through support for sponsorship programmes.

See also Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on the valuable contribution of women to practical disarmament and the need to include women in all related decision-making processes: resolutions A/RES/65/69 on Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control; A/RES/67/48 on Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control; A/RES/68/33 on Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control; and A/RES/69/61 on Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

⁸ See page 17 of annexed Booklet No. 2 and page 14 of annexed Booklet No. 3; see also pages 24, 45, 52 and 308 of UN Women (2015), Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace. A Global Study on the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, available at: [http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20\(1\).pdf](http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf)

instance, according to WILPF partners, did not consider women's participation in the peace process as a priority, claiming that women "were not competent enough".

In the context of peacebuilding efforts in Syria, women organisations report that: "Collectively, dominant stakeholders see nothing wrong in the continued and complete exclusion of women from decision-making fora".⁹ Another example is the case of Libya, where WILPF partners have also reported that limited efforts have been made to include women in community peacebuilding efforts. Despite the fact that a cadre of committed and capable Libyan women stands ready to offer alternative solutions to endless war, they are not included in decision-making on the country's future. Furthermore, WILPF partners have reported that the first two Special Representatives of the Secretary General for Libya did little to ensure their participation in peacebuilding activities.¹⁰ In a recent open letter to Ghassan Salamé, the new Special Representative for Libya, a group of women civil society organisations have stressed the need for his Office to work in partnership with local women peace activists, including by strengthening efforts for women's meaningful engagement in the Libyan peace process.¹¹ It is yet to be seen whether that call will be heeded.

Recognise women as experts, also in areas that go beyond those conventionally understood as "women's issues"

Women's expertise is often 'boxed into' – and the request for their input is restricted to - issues conventionally perceived as 'women's issues', such as gender-based and sexual violence. If they seek to participate in other fora, such as in the disarmament or security realms, women have to constantly prove that they are "qualified" to address these topics. Gender norms and expectations also impact what ideas or concepts are treated as credible when it comes to issues of militarism, security, weapons, or warfare. Generally speaking, women's contributions focusing on disarmament and dialogue are coded as weak, irrational, or naive.

Many disarmament and arms control NGOs or teams in larger NGOs are women-led or, in some cases, are all women. For instance, in addition to our Reaching Critical Will team within WILPF, the Control Arms Coalition, Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, and International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) are all headed by a woman. This demonstrates vividly that there is interest and expertise available that is not being recognised or utilised by governments. The imbalance of women's representation between government representatives¹² and civil society representatives in disarmament fora and beyond can impact on women civil society actors' leverage to participate and effectively contribute in multilateral fora.

Stereotypes are more likely to be perpetuated if state officials and UN staff do not actively work against these tendencies. Increasing women's representation in domains that have been historically seen as male is a vital step to transform gender stereotypes and ensure women's meaningful participation in *all* areas.

⁹ See page 25, WILPF et al. (2017), Syria Response Consultations on the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, available at: <http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/LIBYA-YEMEN-WEB.pdf>

¹⁰ See WILPF statement to the 34th session of the Human Rights Council http://wilpf.org/wilpf_statements/stop-financing-military-operations-in-libya/

¹¹ See, for example, "Open Letter to Ghassan Salama, United Nations Special Envoy on Libya" by a Group of Women Civil Society Organisations in Libya, 19 September 2017: http://wilpf.org/wilpf_statements/open-letter-from-a-group-of-women-civil-society-organisations-in-libya/

¹² To illustrate: Women's participation in disarmament fora been constantly and reportedly low. To illustrate: of 693 diplomats registered for the UNGA First Committee meeting in 2015, around 70% were men and 30% were women. Similarly, at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in 2015, 901 of the 1,226 registered diplomats were men (73.5%) and 325 women (26.5%). See page 19, ILPI and UNIDIR (2016), Gender, Development and Nuclear Weapons – Shared goals, shared concerns. Available at: <http://www.unidir.org/files/publications/pdfs/gender-development-and-nuclear-weapons-en-659.pdf>

Women are not a homogenous group and women's diverse voices must be heard

Another stereotype hindering women's meaningful participation is the idea that women constitute a homogenous group. The assumption that there is a monolithic women's rights position justifies having few women civil society actors in decision-making fora.

Recommendations

All stakeholders should:

- recognise women's agency and expertise beyond normative 'women's issues', and the vital roles played by women in-country. This is a critical first step for multilateral institutions to take concrete actions to ensure women play the fulsome role that is needed;
- actively promote and protect women's meaningful participation in all decision-making processes, national and international, and ensure women's full and effective inclusion in multilateral fora everywhere and at all levels;
- appoint more women and gender experts as UN chief mediators, integrate senior and empowered gender experts in all UN country missions; and ensure gender positions and work is effectively funded;
- challenge gendered coding of concepts and approaches to security and disarmament issues;
- increase the number of women participants in UN fora, such as disarmament or arms control conferences, as well as in expert panels at related side events in UN.

3. Restrictions arising at the national level

Give due attention to the specific risks faced by Women Human Rights Defenders

In addition to risks and violations faced by all human rights defenders, women human rights defenders experience these violations in gender-specific ways, and they are exposed to or targeted for additional gender-based and sexual violence and gender-specific risks. The High Commissioner has highlighted that "women civil society actors face disproportionately adverse reactions, based on discriminatory stereotypes, by both State and non-State actors attempting to delegitimize their work and isolate them from their communities."¹³

Criminalisation of human rights defenders' work affects women differently who are primary caretakers in their families, or have lesser access to financial resources for legal aid. Stigmatization and smearing campaigns against women human rights defenders will exploit degrading and misogynist stereotypes of women's sexuality or question her role as a mother to delegitimize her in the community. Women human rights defenders are subject to additional violence because by acting in the public sphere, they challenge gender norms and stereotypes. The gendered nature of crimes against women human rights defenders further deepens gender inequality and the exclusion of women from public life and naturally also from multilateral fora.

Arms proliferation impacts on women human rights defenders' ability to carry out their work. For example, while arms themselves may not always be directly implicated in gender-based violence, they are correlated with an increase in gendered inequality and a generalised culture of violence, against women in particular. (The impact of arms proliferation is developed further in the text).

Attacks against women human rights defenders can be perpetrated by corporate, state and non-state actors, including public and private security forces. Violence against women human rights defenders is often invisible and treated with impunity. Because human rights defenders often challenge powerful economic and political interests, they face grave violations, from defamation to criminalization, torture and killings. Women human rights defenders acting to address business-related human rights violations often face heightened risks of death, intimidation, harassment,

¹³ UN Index A/HRC/32/20 of 11 April 2016, paragraph 9

exclusion, defamation and stigmatization in addition to threats and acts of rape and sexual harassment at the hands of state security and private security forces.

Counter terrorism financing restrictions have also been utilised by governments as a tool for harassment, prosecution and surveillance of women's organisations. States have used broader definitions of terrorism to criminalise women's rights actors.¹⁴ Alongside physical risks, "the psychological effects of the stress and burnout of operating in such insecure contexts – including that stress and burnout occasioned by counter-terrorist measures and related funding restrictions – are acute."¹⁵

Human rights defenders face additional risks when UN agencies support organisations that are not independent from the government. Whilst UN funding or otherwise supporting these organisations poses a problem in itself, it can indirectly negatively affect independent civil society actors. For example, it can restrict their participation in joint informal consultations organised by UN country teams prior to treaty bodies' or UPR reviews. Independent civil society actors may not feel safe enough to openly discuss human rights violations in their national contexts, if they are to do so in a space shared with organisations that are not independent from the government or cannot be sure about the UN's relationship with the government.¹⁶

Recommendations

States should:

- ensure respect, protection and enabling of the work of human rights defenders and whistle-blowers, with specific and enhanced protection mechanisms for women human rights defenders to make the environment in which they operate a safer, more enabling and supporting one;¹⁷
- recognize women human rights defenders in all their diversity, and address harmful attitudes, practices, and gender stereotypes that fuel violence against women in general, and against women human rights defenders in particular;
- refrain from initiating, pursuing, encouraging or in any other ways permitting defamation campaigns against human rights defenders, including defamation and stigmatization of women human rights defenders;
- refrain from bringing criminal charges against human rights defenders speaking out about corporate-related human rights abuses and participating in legitimate protests or demonstrations to defend and promote human rights;
- fully, promptly and independently investigate attacks and intimidation of human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, and ensure access to justice and remedies in cases of intimidation, defamation, or attacks;
- adopt prompt, effective and impartial measures to provide remedy to human rights defenders who have suffered an attack or are at risk of attack, and provide compensation to human rights defenders who have been victims of abuses, including gender-specific violence, due to their work;

¹⁴ See also page 18, WILPF et al. (2017), Syria Response Consultations on the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, available at: http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/UK-NAP_Syria-Consultations_WEB_EN.pdf

¹⁵ Page 69, Duke Law International Human Rights Clinic and Women Peacemakers Program, *Tightening the Purse Strings: What Countering Terrorism Financing Costs Gender Equality and Security* (2017)

¹⁶ For more information, see page 25 of annexed Booklet No. 2, "How UN agencies and programmes can ensure women's meaningful participation in their work"

¹⁷ Promotion of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms: protecting women human rights defenders, A/RES/68/181, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N13/450/31/PDF/N1345031.pdf>

- support the inclusion of strong and clear language on measures for the protection of rights holders adversely affected by business activities or those challenging corporate abuses, including human rights defenders and whistleblowers, in a legally binding instrument to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises. Such measures should take into account the gender-specific risks entailed by specific groups of human rights defenders, such as women human rights defenders.¹⁸
- support the efforts by the OHCHR and the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights in addressing reprisals against those who seek to cooperate with the UN.

UN agencies and programmes should:

- support the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights in his endeavours to develop and implement a more comprehensive system for preventing and addressing intimidation and reprisals throughout the UN system, including by improving and coordinating response by all UN actors;¹⁹
- ensure that a gender perspective is integrated in UN efforts to address reprisals and promote civil society participation in multilateral processes, whether at the international or country level;
- critically evaluate to which organisations they provide funding, or types of support to the government, and assess how to ensure that independent civil society actors are not put at risk by being involved in UN-sponsored consultations involving organisations that are not independent from the government.

Support women civil society actors' access to flexible, sustained and core-funding

Over the past five years, donor funding that goes directly to women's rights organisations has more than halved.²⁰ Furthermore, only 15 out of 62 (24%) United Nations entities reporting data in 2015 had systems to track resources for gender equality and women's empowerment.²¹

Restrictions posed to women civil society's activities as a result of lack of funding cannot be overstated. There are various factors that lead to the persistent underfunding of women's organisations.

Firstly, money is often channelled to bigger international organisations or UN agencies, which may then distribute funds and sub-grants to smaller grassroots organisations. One case in point: five UN agencies receive 50% of the available humanitarian funding for Syria whilst local groups deliver 75% of interventions.²² This system is ineffective and inefficient, creates barriers, and (indirectly) questions civil society organisations' skills and expertise.

¹⁸ For more information, please see "Integrating a gender perspective into the legally binding instrument on transnational corporations and other business enterprises", at http://wilpf.org/wilpf_statements/integrating-a-gender-perspective-into-the-treaty-on-transnational-corporations-and-other-business-enterprises/

¹⁹ "In expanding and strengthening the UN's response to reprisals across the Organization, the Assistant Secretary-General intends to focus on the following areas: Develop and implement a more comprehensive system for preventing and addressing intimidation and reprisals throughout the UN system, including by improving and coordinating response by all UN actors; Enhance high-level engagement on reprisals, including on how to prevent reprisals from occurring and ensuring action on urgent cases and ensure appropriate action when reprisals occur. A constructive dialogue with all stakeholders will be pursued, in particular with Member States and civil society; Ensure cooperation with all actors involved.

See <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Reprisals/Pages/ReprisalsIndex.aspx>.

²⁰ Chowdhury, 'If We are Serious About Peace and Development, We Must Take Women Seriously' (SDGsForAll, 2017).

²¹ UNSCR1325 Global Study (UN Women, 2015)

²² <http://www.local2global.info/area-studies/funding-syria>

Secondly, in the humanitarian field, women are predominantly seen as beneficiaries of services and goods provided by international organisations or UN agencies, and are rarely acknowledged as service providers that require financial and technical support to be able to continue their work at the frontlines. Furthermore, because of a lack of core funding, women activists have had to scale down if not abandon entirely political and civic activism and have been forced to focus on service provision to be able to sustain themselves. Short-cycle funding and extensive donor requirements equally inhibit women from pursuing their activism work, as they are required to constantly report to donors or seek additional funds.

Thirdly, counter-terrorist laws have made access to funding even harder. As WILPF has highlighted²³ and as is vividly illustrated in a study by the Duke Law International Human Rights Clinic and Women Peacemakers Program,²⁴ counter-terrorism financing and laws have directly and indirectly narrowed the operating space for civil society. Often, donors cut funding to civil society actors working in areas where terrorists or violent extremists are active. De-risking by financial institutions in particular country contexts can prevent civil society from accessing funds. De-risking “encompasses the financial risk management practices by which institutions reduce or lower risk exposure and which can [...] curtail a range of financial services to certain sectors or geographic areas. For financial institutions, particularly when there is little civil society expertise, women’s organizations can be perceived as low-profit, high- risk clients and [...] and women’s rights organizations may be driven out of the formal financial sector.”²⁵

Due to due diligence and compliance requirements, donors shift towards providing larger and fewer grants to bigger international organizations, considered to be able to mitigate any potential risk. Moreover, small grassroots are often too small to have the financial and human resources to comply with extensive requirements imposed by donors. Furthermore, in some instances, banks refuse to open accounts for women’s organizations, either actually or constructively, when requirements are too onerous for grassroots civil society women actors to meet them.

As a result, almost 57% of respondents from 60 different organizations indicate that they have experienced delays in, or not receiving funds from domestic or foreign donors. Some banks even refuse to release domestic or foreign funds. In fact, 90% of women's organisations representatives interviewed as part of the study believe that counter-terrorism measures had an adverse impact on their work for peace, women's rights and gender equality generally.²⁶

Fourthly, austerity measures, as part of structural reform programmes, can have serious impacts on women’s economic rights. We address this issue as a separate point in this submission, yet it is crucial to highlight that austerity measures equally restrict women civil society actors to participate in decision-making processes at all levels.

In light of the above, the requirement for donors to be flexible cannot be over-emphasized.

Recommendations

WILPF reiterates the High Commissioner’s recommendation to provide core flexible funding to civil society organisations with simplified procedures, so as to ensure that funds are available for informal

²³ See for instance: WILPF et al. (2017), Syria Response Consultations on the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, available at: http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/UK-NAP_Syria-Consultations_WEB_EN.pdf

²⁴ Duke Law International Human Rights Clinic and Women Peacemakers Program, *Tightening the Purse Strings: What Countering Terrorism Financing Costs Gender Equality and Security* (2017).

²⁵ See page 9, *ibid.*

²⁶ Page 8, Duke Law International Human Rights Clinic and Women Peacemakers Program, *Tightening the Purse Strings: What Countering Terrorism Financing Costs Gender Equality and Security* (2017).

groups, such as small grassroots women civil society actors.²⁷ Furthermore, WILPF supports the recommendations made in the previously cited study by the Duke Law International Human Rights Clinic and Women Peacemakers Program on the impact of Countering Terrorism Financing on women grassroots organisations ability to do their work. In particular,

Donors should:

- “Increase predictable, accessible, and flexible funding for women’s civil society with simplified procedures to ensure the sustainability of women’s rights organizations and organizing at all levels (local, national, regional, and international), but with a particular focus on the local level. This can include providing multi-year and core funding and less earmarked funds, providing funding according to different organizational modalities (e.g., seed funds to newly-established organizations, small grants with minimal compliance requirements to small organizations, and mid-size grants to larger organizations);
- adopt the UN’s 15% gender-funding target of all funding relating to peace and security to address women’s specific needs and advance gender equality with this percentage being the first, not the final target. Direct funding mechanisms (e.g., that avoid heavy reliance on sub-contracting or consortia arrangements as the source of funding for women’s groups) to increase local and national-level funding is critical to ensure bottom-up, grassroots and independent advocacy, including through embassies.”²⁸

WILPF further recommends that

Donors should:

- specifically, with respect to countering-terrorism financing, engage and include civil society, including grassroots women’s groups, in the design, implementation and assessment of counter terrorism financing measures. Those measures are to be fully compliant with international human rights and humanitarian law, including with the principles of non-discrimination and equality;
- strengthen accountability for results towards women and girls and ensure their democratic ownership by insisting on partnerships with local women’s rights groups, even if they are not officially registered;
- support the creation of a central database of all services offered to women and girls in one specific country or region to avoid repetition, ensure transparency, and identify gaps;
- undertake gender and human rights impact assessment of austerity measures (see next section for more information).

Assess and mitigate the impact of austerity measures on women civil society actors

WILPF’s research has shown that conditionalities, imposed by international organisations, contingent on structural reforms and austerity measures, often have devastating impacts on the economic and social rights of women. This further poses obstacles to women civil society actors’ meaningful participation in decision-making processes in countries such as Bosnia or Ukraine.²⁹ This also,

²⁷ UN Index A/HRC/32/20, paragraphs 88 b) and 74

²⁸ Page 85, Duke Law International Human Rights Clinic and Women Peacemakers Program, *Tightening the Purse Strings: What Countering Terrorism Financing Costs Gender Equality and Security* (2017).

²⁹ See, for instance, WILPF et al. (2017), *Obstacles to Women’s Meaningful Participation in Peace Efforts in Ukraine. Impact of Austerity Measures and Stigmatisation of Organisations Working for Dialogue*. Joint submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Ukraine, 28th Session, available at: http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/UKRAINE.UPR_JointSubmission-30-Mar-2017.pdf. See also: WILPF et al. (2017), *The Effects of Intervention by International Financial Institutions on Women’s Human Rights in Ukraine*. Joint Shadow Report to the CEDAW Review of Ukraine, 66th Session, available at: http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/CEDAW-Shadow-Report-on-Ukraine_20170124.pdf.

See also: WILPF (2017) “A Feminist Perspective on post-conflict Restructuring and Recovery. The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina”. Available at: <http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Feminist-political-economy-ENG-FINAL.pdf>

evidently, can prevent women civil society actors to participate in multilateral institutions, whether at the international or country level.

Particular conditionalities linked to the funding by international bodies such as the EU and the IMF have been shown to contribute to the feminisation of poverty, and the deepening of gender inequalities within the family and society as a whole. This is because firstly, women are among the primary beneficiaries of pro-social spending. For example, cutbacks in public health and social services expenditures rely on shifting the burden of care to women. Gendered social norms mean women are expected to compensate for reduced state support by spending more time to care for sick and elderly family members. This, in turn, also reduces the amount of time available for remunerated work. Secondly, due to the feminization of care in both paid and unpaid work, women tend to be employed in the sectors where most job cuts have taken place.³⁰

Violations of women's economic and social rights, such as result of austerity measures, render therefore any language on women civil society actors' meaningful participation meaningless.

Recommendations

States, international financial institutions and international organisations should:

- conduct *ex ante* and *ex post* facto human rights and gender impact assessments of any new policy, especially structural adjustment programmes and austerity measures. These impact assessments have to be transparent and have to include community participation and consultation.

Challenge and eliminate arms proliferation and militarisation

Arms transfers can have serious consequences for the rights and safety of women in the countries that receive the weapons. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons, both in wartime and non-conflict situations with significant political tensions and systemic gendered discrimination, may disproportionately affect women.³¹ While arms themselves may not always be directly implicated in gender-based violence, they are correlated with an increase in gendered inequality and a generalized culture of violence, against women in particular. Furthermore, the proliferation of arms has a negative impact on women's equality and bargaining power within the household, their mobility, and their political participation. Widespread possession and use of weapons tend to prevent women from fully participating in public and political life, and to hinder their access to and use of resources, business and employment opportunities. Arms' accessibility and availability can facilitate or exacerbate violence against women, not only in situations of armed conflict but also in non-conflict situations, such as in countries that experience high rates of firearm-related deaths, including femicides, as well as high levels of impunity and insecurity.³² Furthermore, the use of weapons of

³⁰ WILPF et al. (2017), The Effects of Intervention by International Financial Institutions on Women's Human Rights in Ukraine. Joint Shadow Report to the CEDAW Review of Ukraine, 66th Session, available at: http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/CEDAW-Shadow-Report-on-Ukraine_20170124.pdf

³¹ See, for example, Chinkin, C. (2016), "Gender and the Arms Trade Treaty: a legal overview", available at: <http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Gender-and-the-Arms-Trade-Treaty-a-legal-overview.pdf>; WILPF (2013), Promoting gender equality in the implementation of the UN Arms Trade Treaty", available at: <http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/ATT-Implementation.pdf> "; WILPF (2015), "Gender-based violence and the ATT, available at: http://wilpf.org/wilpf_publications/gender-based-violence-and-the-arms-trade-treaty/; WILPF (2016), " Preventing gender-based violence through arms control", available at: <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/news/latest-news/10793-new-publication-preventing-gender-based-violence-through-arms-control>; Butler, D. M. (2012), "Gender and the ATT", Saferworld, available at: <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/news-and-views/comment/29-gender-and-the-att> .

³² See, for example, WILPF (2015), "Gender-based violence and the ATT", available at: <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/resources/publications-and-research/publications/10112-gender-based-violence-and-the-arms-trade-treaty>

Various human rights bodies have also emphasised the link between arms transfers and the increased risk of gender-based violence: HRC Resolution 24/35 (2013): "Impact of arms transfers on human rights in armed

indiscriminate effect, such as explosive weapons, may have particular implications for women when they are used in populated areas, as women may be uniquely affected by the destruction of infrastructure or the burden of caring for the wounded, particularly in a context of social gender inequality.

More broadly, high levels of militarism in societies and communities can have negative impacts on women's rights and wellbeing. In places where foreign military bases have a significant presence, such as Japan or Djibouti, local populations often face higher risk of sexual violence, including trafficking, forced prostitution, and rape.³³

In 2015, \$1.67 trillion was spent on arms, while only 2% of peace and security aid was spent on gender equality.³⁴ The amount spent on arms has increased by approximately 60% from 2000 to 2015, the equivalent of 2500 years of expenditure by international disarmament and non-proliferation organisations.³⁵ In 2010, the income of the global feminist movement (\$106 million for 740 women's organisations) was less than the cost of a single F-35 Fighter plane (\$137 million).³⁶

States' spending has been disproportionately geared towards increased militarisation and the defence sector. The UN also supports this militarised logic. In addition to unilateral military

conflicts"; HRC Resolution 26/16 (2014): "Human rights and the regulation of civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms"; HRC Resolution 29/10 (2015): "Human rights and the regulation of civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms"; and HRC Resolution 32/12 (2016): "Impact of arms transfers on human rights".

General Recommendation 30, CEDAW/C/GC/30: The CEDAW Committee has restated its concerns that "the proliferation of conventional arms, especially small arms, including diverted arms from the legal trade, can have a direct or indirect effect on women as victims of conflict-related gender-based violence, as victims of domestic violence and also as protestors or actors in resistance movements." (paragraph 32.). The Committee has also affirmed that States parties are required to focus on the prevention of conflict and all forms of violence, including by having "a robust and effective regulation of the arms trade, in addition to appropriate control over the circulation of existing and often illicit conventional arms, including small arms, to prevent their use to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence." (paragraph 29).

General Recommendation 35, CEDAW/C/GC/35 In its most recent General Recommendation 35 the CEDAW Committee has recognized that accessibility and availability of firearms, including their exportation, as evidenced in militarisation, heighten women's risk of exposure to serious forms of gender-based violence; the CEDAW Committee affirmed state obligations to address gender-based violence by state and non-state actors, including around extraterritorial state military action.

Report to the UN Human Rights Council, UN Index: A/HRC/35/23, 6 June 2017: In addressing gender-based acts of violence and killing, the Special Rapporteur has recently recommended that states "develop mechanisms to analyse whether any arms being assessed for approval for transfer, as well as the granting of licenses on production, will facilitate or contribute to gender-based violence or violence against women by the recipient, in accordance with the obligation on risk assessment processes of the Arms Trade Treaty.", paragraph 116

UN Index A/HRC/35/8, 3 May 2017. Report the 35th regular session of the Human Rights Council, requested by the Human Rights Council with resolution 31/12, 1 July 2016. The report stresses that, to be effective, human rights risk assessments need to "be carried out on a case-by- case basis and take full account of the gender dimension of arms transfers", paragraph 49

³³ See for example WILPF (2017), Remote warfare and sexual violence in Djibouti, Available at:

<http://reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Publications/remote-warfare-sexual-violence-djibouti.pdf>

³⁴ <http://www.peacewomen.org/WPS-Financing>

³⁵ Page 143, UN Women (2015), Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace. A Global Study on the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, available at:

[http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20\(1\).pdf](http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf)). Available at:

[http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20\(1\).pdf](http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf)

³⁶ <https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/20-years-shamefully-scarce-funding-feminists-and-womens-rights-movements>

operations, there is now an expanding list of military deployments supported by the UN and regional organisations, such as NATO, the European Union, the African Union and the Arab League.³⁷

Furthermore, this excessive military spending acts as a barrier to gender equality, non-violence and implementation of the SDGs, as tremendous resources spent on weapons are not spent on supporting social development and conflict prevention. In fact, money spent on weapons often exacerbates challenges to development and equality.

Against this backdrop, skewed expenditures towards defence and militarisation impacts women's ability to participate meaningfully in two ways: it firstly contributes to increased arms proliferation and increased levels of insecurity; and the immense expenditure on security at the expense of investing in social and economic rights more broadly and in women's organisations specifically, has a direct impact on women civil society actors' ability to participate at the local, national and multilateral level.

SDG 16³⁸ and the Beijing Platform for Action and Agenda 21 have highlighted the need to reduce excessive military expenditures and redirect resources the economic and social development, particularly of women.³⁹

Arms exporters must do more to take responsibility for the impact of the weapons they are selling. Under the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), states parties are obliged to deny arms exports, if merely a *risk* can be identified that arms transfers may commit or facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian law or human rights law. Article 7 (4) of the ATT requires that States shall, prior to authorization of the export of arms under its jurisdiction, in an objective and non-discriminatory manner, take into account the risk of conventional arms being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women. WILPF has raised states parties' obligations under the ATT and other human rights instruments in various submissions to UN treaty bodies.⁴⁰ The potential for the ATT to reduce arms transfers that facilitate gender-based violence is there but current state practice indicates that this is not yet being implemented and in fact, export control officials state that they do not know how to make such an assessment. Of course, importing countries have a responsibility as well, and gender-based violence is a problem in all countries irrespective of their role in the global arms trade.

³⁷ <http://peacewomen.org/security-council/2015-high-level-review-global-study>

³⁸ SDG 16.4: "By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime."

<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-16-peace-justice-and-strong-institutions/targets/>

³⁹ Beijing Area E, Agenda 21, 22.16: "Undertake to explore new ways of generating new public and private financial resources, inter alia, through the appropriate reduction of excessive military expenditures, including global military expenditures, trade in arms and investment for arms production and acquisition, taking into consideration national security requirements, so as to permit the possible allocation of additional funds for social and economic development, in particular for the advancement of women"

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/armed.htm>

⁴⁰ See, for instance, WILPF (2017), The Impact of Italy's Arms Transfers on Women – Italy's Extraterritorial Obligations under CEDAW, Shadow Report submitted to the 67th Session of the CEDAW Committee. Available at: http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/WILPF-CEDAW-ITALY-Report_Final_June_17-2.pdf;

WILPF and ECCHR (2017), The Impact of Germany's Arms Transfers on Women – Germany's Extraterritorial Obligations under CEDAW, Joint Shadow Report submitted to the 66th Session of the CEDAW Committee.

Available at: http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/CEDAW-Shadow-Report-on-Germany_20170130.pdf

WILPF et al. (2017), Women, Peace and Security in Nigeria, Joint Shadow Report submitted to the 67th Session of the CEDAW Committee. available at:

http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Nigeria_CEDAW_FINAL_June_2017.pdf

Recommendations

Exporting States should:

- conduct transparent human rights and gender impact assessments, in line with the ATT's requirements, before granting export licenses;
- listen to the experiences of women that have been impacted by weapons to better understand the problem and incorporate this information into arms transfer decisions.
- Provide training for export officials on how to make a gender-based violence risk assessments and seek experts advice on how develop such assessments and training.

Importing States should:

- critically assess disproportionate spending on the defence sector at the detriment of social spending;
- work with exporting countries to prevent the diversion and misuse of arms such as in facilitating gender-based violence at the national, community, and household levels.

States with foreign military bases should:

- dismantle those bases;
- in the meantime, ensure proper training for soldiers and contractors about trafficking and gender-based violence; and provide for prevention and remediation mechanisms in relation to sexual violence or other forms of gender-based violence.

Combat the stigmatisation of peace activists

Civil society actors engaging in dialogue across ethnic, national or other divides provide a valuable counter to violence and also sources of ideas and support for peace processes. As women play a more prominent part in civil society initiatives for dialogue and cooperation than in official peace negotiations, such activities also provide a valuable channel for feeding in the views of women from the community level as well as drawing on their skills and engagement to contribute to resolution of a conflict. However, civil society actors working for peace are often subject to smear campaigns, being labelled as “enemies of the state”, “traitors”, and in the case of Ukrainian peace activists as “pro-Russian” or “pro-separatists”. For example, as WILPF together with Ukrainian NGOs describe in a joint submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Ukraine, “dialogues bringing together representatives of civil society from Ukraine, Russia and the non-government controlled territories are portrayed as inherently dangerous and those engaging in such activities as either unwittingly, or wittingly, becoming agents of “the enemy”.⁴¹

Recommendations

States should:

- take concrete steps against the stigmatization of civil society actors engaged in dialogue and cooperation activities and promote awareness-raising programs for the public and officials about the importance and legitimacy of such activities and facilitate peace activists' work.

⁴¹ Page 6, WILPF et al. (2017), Obstacles to Women's Meaningful Participation in Peace Efforts in Ukraine. Impact of Austerity Measures and Stigmatisation of Organisations Working for Dialogue. Joint submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Ukraine, 28th Session, available at: http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/UKRAINE.UPR_JointSubmission-30-Mar-2017.pdf

4. Restrictions arising at the international level

Ensure avenues for women civil society actors to physically be present in multilateral fora

Aforementioned lack of funds poses not only restrictions to women grassroots' work in-country, but also poses serious obstacles to cover travel expenses needed to be physically present in multilateral fora. Even if funds are available, women activists may still be targeted in the airport and prevented from travelling.⁴²

Another big obstacle to women's freedom of movement is the widespread denial of visas. This year, the foundation and purpose of the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) was compromised and challenged by the travel ban introduced by the US Administration on 27 January 2017, which sought to ban entry to the US for people from Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. In addition to the ban on these countries, women from other countries in the Middle East (not subject to the ban), from countries in Central and South America, and from some countries in Africa, also reported being denied visas. They were thus denied the opportunity to let their voices be heard at CSW61 in New York. In September 2017, the US administration issued its third travel ban, which is more expansive than its predecessors. The ban targets eight countries, with three new countries: North Korea, Chad and Venezuela.⁴³

These unilateral actions by the US as the host state has had a major impact on the ability of the UN to uphold the principles enunciated in the UN Charter, in human rights law, and indeed in the CSW. The US Administration's travel ban brought an issue that had long been present into the spotlight: host countries' (visa) policies have significant detrimental effects on women activists' freedom of movement.

Furthermore, WILPF has experienced first-hand how embassies of a country grant and deny visas based upon what appear to be inconsistent policies.

Moreover, last-minute changes to the Programme of Work, such as it was the case during the 36th regular Human Rights Council (HRC) session when, at the very last minute, an interactive dialogue was brought forward by one day, impact human rights defenders' participation in the HRC. In the case of HRC36, for example, the last-minute decision to hold the interactive dialogue with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances on the first day of the session rather than the following one prevented a representative of Families for Freedom from addressing the HRC in person. Families for Freedom is a group of Syrian women activists who all have relatives either disappeared or in detention and campaigning to mobilise public opinion around the issue of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances.

In several instances, member states and UN bodies have provided only one month's notice to civil society prior to critical meetings and events at the multilateral level. For instance, in 2015, around the 15th Anniversary and High-Level Review of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, civil society was informed that Spain had changed the date of a debate with just one month's notice. "This was clearly putting the schedule of the Prime Minister of Spain and the Secretary-General over that of civil society voices from around the world who are key to implementation and action."⁴⁴ Practices like those have persisted, with the date for the 17th annual open debate on Women, Peace and Security being confirmed only at a very late stage.

⁴² Harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders in form of travel bans are again highlighted in the OHCHR report UN Index A/HRC/36/31 on reprisals against human rights defenders

⁴³<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/sep/25/trump-administration-travel-ban-president>

⁴⁴ http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/Open%20letter%20October%202015_0.pdf

There is a lack of consistency in accreditation policies and guidelines, which detrimentally impacts women, and mothers in particular. We are also aware of women who needed to bring their small children to UN human rights bodies' meetings in Geneva and whose children were denied access by UNOG Security; this was despite the fact the children would have been looked after by someone while their mothers were speaking at the UN meeting. In one case, the person who planned to bring her child to a CEDAW Committee's session had notified the relevant secretariat weeks prior to the meeting. Nonetheless, UNOG security refused to allow her child in, and when the mother protested, the security guard threatened to prevent the mother from entering UN premises. This practice prevents mothers of young children, who cannot place their children in day-care, or who need to travel with their children, from accessing UN facilities and participating in UN meetings.

Less than 15 years ago, NGOs were able to observe the negotiations and approach delegations on the floors of the UN conference rooms in New York. In recent years, NGO participation has been subjected to increasing restrictions, limiting our capacity to work with member states. During CSW61 and the 2017 High-Level Political Forum, civil society representatives were kept outside the conference rooms where member state representatives engaged in the formal deliberations on the agendas.⁴⁵ During CSW61, UN Security staff attempted to remove civil society (T-Pass Holders) from the building after 6pm. Furthermore, when the General Assembly General Debates are taking place, civil society is only able to enter the UN premises with special event passes that are distributed before specific events. These actions directly and indirectly inhibit women's full, equal and effective participation in multilateral institutions and processes.

Lastly, UN security personnel's militaristic uniforms, predominantly consisting of men, may deter, intimidate or frighten women to engage with the UN. The presence of security personnel in uniform in UN premises can remind women activists of traumatic experiences, coming from conflict or highly volatile and insecure contexts.

Recommendations

States should:

- follow consistent, non-discriminatory, transparent procedures for visa applications;
- ensure that women's participation and engagement in UN mechanisms and forums can be facilitated rapidly and efficiently;
- ensure that visas are granted to women human rights defenders that allow them to participate in UN and other multilateral fora;
- prioritise holding meetings in accessible spaces at the UN that are open to civil society with early indication of these events for planning.

UN agencies and programmes should:

- facilitate access to UN decision-making bodies for civil society through accessible venues, flexible translation, and expanded financial support for UN civil society speakers to allow for time for donor and advocacy meetings;
- provide support to women in their visa applications, for example, through timely letters of invitation;
- allow mothers who need to take their young children with them to UN meetings to do so;
- assess the necessity for UN security to wear military uniforms and in light of the impact this can have on women activists and survivors.

Ensure wide access to information

WILPF reiterates recommendations made by the High Commissioner to expand transparency of public, multilateral meetings through, for instance, webcasting.⁴⁶ However, the technical language

⁴⁵ <http://www.peacewomen.org/node/98284>

⁴⁶ Paragraph 89 c), UN Index UN A/HRC/32/20

and formalities of UN proceedings can be a deterrent for grassroots organisations. Often, key documents are not translated into languages other than English, French or Spanish. Specifically, new opportunities for funding, changing rules of procedures, such as the recently introduced accreditation system at UNOG, is not widely communicated, and often does not reach grassroots organisations on the ground.

Recommendations

UN agencies and programmes should:

- set up webinars and short videos prior to UN meetings that inform about practicalities in an accessible manner, and by doing so,
- “de-mystify” formalities and processes;
- support the in-country dissemination of informative videos, booklets and the like, including in rural and remote areas regarding possibilities to engage with the multilateral system.

States should:

- ensure that civil society actors have access to tools and information about opportunities and possibilities to engage with the multilateral system;
- support the dissemination of informative videos, booklets and the like, including in rural and remote areas of the country, regarding possibilities to engage with the multilateral system.

5. For more information

Please see:

YouTube video "[Ensuring Women's Meaningful Participation in the UN System](#)"

Links to the Booklet addressed to [UN Agencies and Programmes](#) and [fact sheet](#).

Booklet addressed to [Member States](#) and [fact sheet](#).



**HOW UN AGENCIES AND
PROGRAMMES CAN ENSURE
WOMEN'S MEANINGFUL
PARTICIPATION IN THEIR
WORK**





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JUNE, 2017

How UN agencies and programmes can ensure women's meaningful participation in their work

1st Edition

28 pp.

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Design and layout: Concept Machine

www.wilpf.org

INTRODUCTION



The United Nations (UN) of today is different from that of 1945, and faces a completely different world full of diverse and complex issues, threats and challenges. Adapting to these changing circumstances is of great importance if the UN is going to live up to its Charter and succeed in maintaining international peace and security, in developing friendly relations and partnerships among the nations of the world, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and international law on a global scale. As the world's biggest global peace organisation, the UN works to address issues that transcend national boundaries. However, this task is becoming increasingly complicated, and it seems as though the UN has lost its way.

Scandals about UN peacekeepers who commit sexual violence and exploit women and children in the countries of mission have been a consistent problem, from Sarajevo to Haiti. The UN's responses to such atrocities make civil society organisations and others question the purpose of UN peace missions. Peace missions that drag on indefinitely, as is the case in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the increasing number of military deployments for UN missions, further highlight the fact that changes are needed within the UN system.

With growing nationalism, populism and militarism worldwide, and 46 recognised ongoing conflicts around the world, now is the time to make changes and rethink our current multilateral system. The UN was set up as a peace organisation and one that would promote respect for human rights, but that purpose has been subordinated to the geo-political concerns and national interests of its strongest members.

As a reaction to the shrinking space of civil society and the lack of women's meaningful participation, WILPF held a convening in April 2017. This booklet, **How UN agencies and programmes can ensure women's meaningful participation in their work** draws from the discussions that took place during the three days of the Convening. More than 150 women's rights and peace activists from around the world as well as representatives of Member States and UN agencies gathered to discuss how to make the UN more inclusive and help it live up to the founding principles of its Charter. This booklet is designed specifically for UN agencies and provides recommendations ranging from supporting women human rights defenders and women's organisations to what the UN agencies can do to improve women's participation in the UN system and incorporate the main principles of gender equality in all its actions and frameworks.

» 2 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. AVENUES FOR TIMELY, ADEQUATE AND EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION

Representatives of UN agencies should:

- » Facilitate access to UN body decision-making for civil society through accessible venues, flexible translation, expanded financial support for UN civil society speakers to allow time for donor and advocacy meetings, and sharing of information and guidance for civil society engagement that reaches a wide audience including short films, videos, and webinars with accessible language.
- » Provide support to women in their visa applications, for example, through timely letters of invitation.
- » Strengthen access for women in the Global South by rotating the host country for important convenings, such as the yearly Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and ensuring that the host country is one that will not create additional challenges of access.
- » Provide political, financial, and technical support for platforms enabling civil society participation at local, national, and regional levels that build on the Sustainable Development Major Group and Other Stakeholders system, and on principles of procedural justice.
- » Strengthen gender mainstreaming (including gender-sensitive analysis, sex-disaggregated data, and gender budgeting) within the organisational culture of all UN agencies, and ensure gender analysis and information based on local women's experience is central to all UN action around conflict prevention, response, and peacebuilding.
- » Ensure consistency and effective collaboration amongst all UN agencies at all levels, and coordinate analysis and strategic planning through a civil society participatory process and women's human rights lens.

2. LONG-TERM SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

Representatives of UN agencies should:

- » Ensure women's meaningful participation by substantially increasing funding to grassroots women human rights defenders to support and recognise their work on the ground and their participation and advocacy efforts in international human rights procedures. Funding should be coupled with a two-part approach that includes gender assessment before any project, and involving women in the design of any project.
- » Ensure the achievement of the Grand Bargain agreement's target to channel 25 % of all humanitarian funding to local civil society organisations.
- » Adapt funding to address the priorities identified by local women's civil society organisations, and support them with core and ongoing support.

- » Provide technical assistance and support to civil society organisations instead of competing with them for funding, and instead of creating duplicating platforms.
- » Implement a unified monitoring and evaluation system that follows UN agencies' funding to INGO programmes, analysing how much of the original funding reaches women beneficiaries, and create learning systems to improve impact for grassroots women.
- » Consult with local women's organisations and women community leaders on finding and developing the most secure ways to channel funding for civic and humanitarian activism into conflict areas.
- » Put pressure on states not to use counter-terrorism laws as a pretext for not sending funding to local organisations working in highly militarised or repressive environments.

3. ENSURING IMPLEMENTATION OF WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

Representatives of UN agencies should:

- » Put pressure on states to develop, finance, and implement UN Security Council (UNSCR) 1325 National Action Plans with holistic agendas and meaningful participation of civil society throughout. Also push states to ensure that national legislation is harmonised with ratified instruments (including through comprehensive and participatory gender budgeting), and to submit national reports to human rights mechanisms on time.
- » Provide political, technical, and financial support for women's civil society organisations on political advocacy (not just service provision) work, and support for advocates to learn and strengthen work on independent research, monitoring, and evaluation for accountability on human rights bodies' recommendations.
- » Ensure that the collaboration of UN agencies with governments does not undermine or compromise the application of fundamental UN principles and the promotion of human rights.

4. POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT THAT VALUES WOMEN'S CIVIL SOCIETY WORK

Representatives of UN agencies should:

- » Ensure that peace processes are informed by women's experiences and perspectives on the ground to reflect national priorities, including the priorities of the local communities and the different groups within them.
- » Support governments to ensure that every civil society actor has access to tools and information on the peace agreement. States must ensure regular exchange with civil society and leaders within the community, and bring their input to the centre of the negotiation process.
- » Ensure women organisations' real meaningful participation in peace processes, including by establishing an explicit procedure for women to participate in and impact peace processes, and by establishing regular regional and national consultation processes with women's groups and peace leaders.
- » Acknowledge women as experts and knowledge providers, recognise peace activists and women human rights defenders as having a mandate for peace, and establish means for their direct involvement in both formal and informal processes.
- » Re-think humanitarian action beyond the boxes of classic humanitarian sectors (e.g., food, shelter) to recognise and support the holistic contribution of women-led organisations to humanitarian assistance and protection.
- » Act as a proactive conflict prevention body instead of a conflict management body.
- » Support analyses of current dominant strategies and policy frameworks for economic reform and their role in perpetuating structural inequalities.
- » Ensure that peace processes embody democratic inclusion, support human rights and non-discrimination including by rejecting neoliberal structural adjustment and investing in gender reparations, social safety nets, and gendered transitional justice.
- » Ensure that women are not only at the table in peace negotiations, but also in governance, in international processes, including in any negotiations with International Financial Institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- » Clearly define Peacekeeping Operations' (PKOs) mandates—purpose, mission, and duration—allowing a space for evaluation and learning.

- » Accept that militarism is not the only response to security, and recognise women human rights defenders as the true bearers of the peace mandate, not the military. Fundamentally reframe security away from militarised approaches to one based on human rights, sustainable development, and equality.
- » Introduce a feminist perspective into the implementation of the doctrine Responsibility to Protect, including shifting the emphasis into the pillars of prevention and protection.
- » Publicly name and shame countries that supply arms to countries in conflict, with fragile contexts, or with a high prevalence of gender-based violence, and pressure them to stop doing so. Pressure states to ratify, accede to, and implement the Arms Trade Treaty, along with other arms agreements, and to conduct transparent, comprehensive gender and human rights impact assessments before transferring weapons.
- » Enable increased participation of women in UN delegations to multilateral disarmament meetings.
- » Ensure a balanced gender representation of mediators.
- » Call for Member States to develop adequate budgetary allocations in order to ensure social safety nets and innovative social protection floors in line with 1992 Rio and 1995 Beijing commitments on innovative finance, including on reducing military spending and redirecting to gender equitable social development.

At WILPF's Convening [the Convening], participants from 40 countries discussed how to reclaim the UN as a peace organisation and bring it back to its Charter. A large number of women's groups and civil society organisations (CSOs) were represented, and participants shared their insights, experiences and ideas for a path forward. The discussions during the Convening resulted in a number of recommendations useful for Member State representatives.

» 3

WOMEN IN THE FIELD OF PEACE AND SECURITY

Women's real and meaningful participation in the debates within the UN system is both a human rights obligation and a catalytic investment for change. Women's meaningful participation is essential for obtaining an accurate picture of what is needed to prevent and resolve conflicts, rebuild society post-conflict, and ensure sustainable peace. Women's experiences during and after war and conflict differ from those of men. However, women are not a homogeneous group. Interventions should therefore not be based on stereotypes, but on the particular needs, issues, and experiences of the people they are meant to serve. This requires tailoring actions based on an inclusive approach with regard to gender, context, culture, and country.

"The UN is patriarchal in structure, in its processes and policies. It has proven largely incapable of addressing the challenges which we confront."
– Madeleine Rees, WILPF Secretary General

"Women are the first ones to feel the rise of extremism because no extremist movement in the world, whether they take on religion or they take on an ethno-nationalistic identity, will leave women alone. They have an issue with us in the public space. So if you are speaking out, they will come after you."
– Sanam Anderlini, International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)

Women human rights defenders face serious risks

Patriarchy has no specific religion or culture. It appears in all nations and cultures and affects political processes and decision-making at all levels. Patriarchal oppression is amplified during conflict, and militarism imposes and strengthens negative masculine identity. Patriarchy, militarism, and militarised masculinity increase the risks women face during conflict due to the increase of various forms of violence, often including organised sexual violence and the use of gender-based violence as a tactic of war.

Challenging patriarchal values, inequality, gender stereotypes, and sexism is not an easy task. It often comes with high personal risks for peace activists and human rights defenders on the ground. These can include persistent undermining of legitimacy, attacks on their morals, sexual and gender-based violence, harassment, hate speech, pressure, threats and personal, family, or cyber-attacks. UN personnel is not immune from contributing to these challenges. Providing safe spaces for women human rights defenders and peace activists is critical for building champions and movements for gender justice and peace.

Barriers to meaningful participation in decision-making

Women face enormous practical and structural barriers to their participation in decision-making. This is a global phenomenon that stretches across every level of society, and in local, regional, and global contexts. The United Nations is no exception.

Women human rights defenders and peace activists operate in a domain that historically has been seen as male. Unfortunately, it is still perceived as such. The idea that men are the protectors and women are the victims is still strong in narratives and discourses about conflict, its prevention, and resolution. Instead of being considered as experts or knowledge providers, women are seen as tokens or only allowed to participate in processes where they have no real influence and where the agendas have been decided on beforehand. They often find themselves having to constantly prove that they are “qualified” to participate in political fora.

A further obstacle to women's meaningful participation is the prevalent stereotype that all women have one voice. The assumption that there is a monolithic women's rights position leads to one woman being assigned to represent all women. This approach justifies having few women in decision-making fora.

Women's meaningful participation is essential to achieving sustainable peace

Excluding women from peace processes, peace agreements, and post-conflict reconstruction efforts has severe consequences—not least because it prevents the realisation of real and sustainable peace. Research shows that there is a strong connection between the inclusion of women in peace processes and a more stable, longer-lasting peace. Today, we see a tendency to give women symbolic roles in internationally driven processes. Too often, women are added to the peace table as token additions to the militarised sides, or engaged informally in peace talks without any formal role or follow-up. This may look good on state and UN agency representative records, yet it has little real impact. Changing the failed status quo requires that members of women's civil society have the opportunity to actively contribute to peace processes as independent leaders on women's rights and peace. As stated by the participants at WILPF's Convening: It is not 'political correctness' for women to participate—it is common sense.

In a time when there is compelling research documenting that women's participation is crucial in achieving real and sustainable peace, it is more important than ever for the UN to take concrete actions to ensure women play the fulsome role that is demanded, by women, by law, and by common sense. Recognising women's agency and the vital roles played by women in-country is a critical first step; it needs to be reflected in the national and international political processes. Its full and effective inclusion in peace processes, in peace agreements, and in post-conflict governance structures, is required everywhere and at all levels.

“Organisations with feminist agendas in countries of conflict are facing a lot of challenges.”

– Laila Alodaat, WILPF

“In a survey of 1,200+ people, we found that different groups had different security issues. Women are not all the same.”

– Hajer Shareif, Libya

“We live in a world defined by inequality and conflict. Women and girls' rights and views as represented by women's rights organisations are the most salient and therefore women human rights defenders need to be at the table.”

– Lopa Banerjee, Civil Society Section Chief, UN Women

When women are included in peace processes there is a 20% increase in the probability of an agreement lasting 2 years. There is a 35% increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least 15 years.

– UN Women

>> 4

WOMEN'S CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO UN AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES

4.1 AVENUES FOR WOMEN'S TIMELY, ADEQUATE, AND EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE UN SYSTEM

Women activists' freedom of movement from the Global South is restricted, including denial of visa

"Increasing restrictions for participation in UN spaces make it difficult for civil society organisations to ground UN and Member States in reality"
– ARROW

Participants identify general practical obstacles that prevent women civil society from accessing and participating in the UN system. Participants note that they do not get invited to international fora in the first place. Participants from NGOs without ECOSOC consultative status add that they cannot engage with some UN mechanisms that require ECOSOC status.

There is a lack of consistency in accreditation policies and guidelines, which detrimentally impacts women, and mothers in particular. From other WILPF activities taking place at the UN, we know that women who needed to bring their small children to UN human rights bodies' meetings in Geneva have reported that their children were denied access by UNOG Security; this was despite the fact the children would have been looked after by someone while their mothers were speaking at the meeting. In one case, the person who planned to bring her child to a CEDAW Committee's session had notified the relevant secretariat weeks prior to the meeting. Nonetheless, UNOG security refused to allow her child in, and when the mother protested, the security guard threatened to prevent the mother from entering UN premises. This practice prevents mothers of young children who cannot place their children in daycare, or who need to travel with their children, from accessing UN facilities and participating in UN meetings.

"It is important to engage with the UN because it is the only multilateral organisation and the place where all governments can be held accountable. Therefore, we must engage with the UN to form a collective voice and because governments are becoming increasingly conservative."
– Women Thrive

The US Administration's travel ban brought an issue that had long been present into the spotlight. Host countries' (visa) policies have significant detrimental effects on women activists' freedom of movement. Many multilateral fora and UN headquarters are located in the Global North, limiting women's mobility and possibilities to access these fora.

Participants also report that UN material, such as resolutions or recommendations, and admission rules and procedures for civil society actors, is disseminated in a technical and bureaucratic language. This can be intimidating and exclusionary for local grassroots activists working on the ground—particularly if they do not speak any of the six UN languages.

Recommendations

Representatives of UN agencies and programmes, including UN country teams and Resident Coordinators, should:

» facilitate access to UN decision-making bodies for civil society through accessible venues, flexible translation, and expanded financial support for UN civil society speakers to allow for time for donor and advocacy meetings.

» share information and guidance that reaches a wide audience for civil society engagement, including short films, videos, and webinars with accessible language.

» provide support to women in their visa applications, for example, through timely letters of invitation.

Representatives of UN agencies and programmes should:

» strengthen access for women in the Global South by rotating the host country for important convenings, such as the yearly Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and ensure that the host country is one that will not create additional challenges of access.

» allow mothers who need to take their young children with them to UN meetings to do so.

Representatives of UN agencies, including the UN Secretariat, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, should:

» revisit accreditation models and the criteria for NGOs qualifying for ECOSOC status.

» apply expansive models of NGO participation in international UN meetings that ensure the participation of women's grassroots with or without ECOSOC consultative status.

» evaluate NGOs' merit to be accredited based on whether they advance the Charter.

UN representatives are disconnected from women activists' perspectives

Participants highlight the UN country teams' lack of knowledge and interest on the ground for including gender and grassroots perspectives into their work. Strikingly, one participant reports that the head of a UN Women country office refused to name either herself or UN Women's work in the country as "feminist". The "F-Word" is not comprehensively used amongst UN Women staff, and feminist ideals are even less known and applied amongst other UN agencies.

Such disconnect between UN representatives and the experience and analysis of women's NGOs prevents the realities of women's lives being brought into the international domain, and undermines the stated objectives of the institutions.

Good practice:

Participants report that the United Nations Development Group facilitates visa applications by asking civil society organisations which are part of the Women's Major Group to vouch for other organisations and their representatives. The Women's Major Group, established in Rio de Janeiro during the Earth Summit in 1992, is open to all organisations promoting sustainable development and women's rights, and facilitates women's civil society input into the UN policy space.

"We cannot let bureaucracy and patriarchy continue taking over the women's agenda within the UN."
– Katherine Ronderos, Colombia

"Let us not forget we need to explain the world to the UN, not the UN to the world. If it is not relevant for the local context, it is simply not going to work."
– Hajer Sharief, Libya

“The UN must be the natural ally of civil society to reclaim human rights and to fight against violence, racism and governments’ fundamentalism.”
– Urgent Action Fund
Latin America

“I had the privilege to serve as Resident Coordinator in Colombia for three years. Together with some truly extraordinary women’s groups and with a very strong UN Women office, we really managed to promote women’s active participation in the peace process. While no doubt in many areas it could have been stronger, I think it remains a best practice example.”
– Fabrizio Hochschild,
Assistant Secretary-General
for Strategic Coordination in
the Executive Office

Recommendations

Representatives of UN agencies and programmes, including UN Country Teams and Resident Coordinators, should:

- » be trained on gender, and challenge traditional concepts of masculinity.
- » ensure that when recruiting the head of an agency or Resident Coordinator, particularly related to women’s rights, such as UN Women, the UN ensures that candidates have a strong track record of working on women’s human rights issues.
- » develop more inclusive governance models that strengthen women’s voices and create more space for the participation of non-UN actors in UN entity planning and action.
- » provide political, financial, and technical support for platforms enabling civil society participation that build on the Major Group and Other Stakeholders system at local, national, and regional levels to ensure space for civil society’s public participation and procedural justice.
- » lead by example and go beyond the “tick box approach” to gender mainstreaming at the project level, to gender mainstreaming (including gender sensitive analysis, sex-disaggregated data, and gender budgeting) within the organisational culture of UN agencies.

Good practice:

- » UNFPA has committed to support and strengthen commitment to gender-transformative action. 75% of UNFPA offices across the globe have engaged in involving men to advance gender equality.
- » “The Sustainable Development Goal Major Group and Other Stakeholders system provides a good practice mechanism for civil society engagement rooted in principles of procedural justice. This system recognises and builds space for participation with diverse communities, including: workers and trade unions, women, scientific and technological community, NGOs, local authorities, indigenous peoples, farmers, children and youth, and business and industry.”
– Sascha Gabizon, Women in Europe for a Common Future, Netherlands
- » “The UN needs to recognise and change the structured system of exclusion through a strategy for engagement and inclusion. UN must be a protector of feminist ideas.”
– Lopa Banarjee, Civil Society Section Chief, UN Women

UN headquarters and UN country teams are inconsistent in their standpoints

Participants address the discrepancy between positions held by the UN in international fora, and UN country teams' stance. Participants cite as an example the inconsistencies between UN representatives in New York, speaking out against travel restrictions for human rights defenders from Muslim countries, and UN country teams' silence on travel bans imposed on human rights defenders by their host countries.

Recommendations

Representatives of UN agencies and programmes, including UN Country Teams and Resident Coordinators, should:

- » ensure consistency amongst all agencies at all levels and coordinate analysis and strategic planning through human rights lens.
- » coordinate and collaborate more effectively on the ground and at the international level.
- » speak out against travel bans imposed on human rights defenders in countries where they operate.

4.2 LONG-TERM SUPPORT AND RESOURCES FOR WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

Lack of sustained funding impacts women activists' ability to engage with the UN system

“According to a global research on LGBTQI funding conducted by the Global Philanthropy project, funding specifically focused on the needs of gay and bisexual men and men who have sex with men is more than two times higher than the amount of funding focused on lesbian and bisexual women and queer women.”
– Kseniya Kirichenko, ILGA, Geneva

Engaging with the UN, including through submitting shadow reports to the CEDAW Committee, requires women's organisations to have significant financial and human resources. The travel costs associated with participating in a UN meeting are also unaffordable for many grassroots activists. Often, because of scarce funding, participants suggest that they are faced with the choice between engaging with the UN or continuing their day-to-day work. Such challenges are heightened for marginalised groups, or groups that face multiple forms of discrimination—such as indigenous women and LBTQI individuals.

Recommendations

Representatives of UN agencies should:

» ensure that funding includes provisions for engagement with UN human rights and other bodies, and support local women leaders' participation and advocacy efforts in the UN system.

Lack of sustained funding poses obstacles to the work of women's organisations

“Five UN agencies receive 50% of the available humanitarian funding for Syria. Local groups deliver 75% of interventions.”
– Rola Hallam, Can Do

According to the participants, there is a serious lack of funding for organisations working on the ground. Available resources are disproportionately channelled towards state or UN agencies or International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), and tend to focus on service delivery. The UN receives funding, allows for sub-granting to other UN agencies and finally distributes smaller sub-grants to actors on the ground delivering the services. Such a system is ineffective and inefficient, creates barriers, and (indirectly) questions local organisations' capacity to absorb funding and resources.

Participants also point to a normalisation of violence of particularly at-risk groups outside of traditionally understood conflict settings that are not appropriately addressed by funding priorities. For instance, trans- or intersex advocates living in Western Europe are underfunded, as donors perceive them to live and work in “generally” privileged and safe regions.

Participants observe that the UN is creating parallel structures by funding UN agencies and INGOs instead of strengthening local capacity.

There is a lack of trust in the skills and expertise of grassroots organisations. The donor community also tends to provide short-term grants, which are restricted to six months or a year. Such “compartmentalised” funding prevents long-term, strategic thinking and political commitment, as grassroots organisations have to spend long hours writing project proposals and project narrative reports instead of focusing on their actual work.

Policies linked to counter-terrorism agendas, including Countering Terrorism Financing, and increased militarised security, have had a catastrophic impact on grassroots organisations around the world. These rules have been designed and implemented in a way that fails to take account of the challenging settings under which grassroots organisations in conflict countries need to survive and operate.

- » Under the “Grand Bargain” agreement, 22 Member States and 28 UN agencies or international organisations have committed to provide 25 % of global humanitarian funding to local and national responders by 2020 and to increase multi-year funding.

Recommendations

Representatives of UN agencies, including those who have committed to the Grand Bargain's target, should:

- » ensure that the Grand Bargain's target is achieved and continue to work to have grassroots organisations recognised for their contribution and financially supported.
- » substantially increase funding for grassroots women human rights defenders and peace activists.
- » provide technical assistance and support to civil society organisations instead of competing with them for funding.
- » make sure that funding goes to organisations, whether male- or female-led, that holistically address the needs of women on the ground. Funding decisions should comprise a two-part approach that includes gender assessment before any project, and involving women in the design of any project.
- » be willing to be trained by local organisations on local priorities, and adapt funding priorities accordingly.
- » implement a unified, obligatory monitoring and evaluating system that follows UN agencies' funding to INGO programmes, analysing how much of it reaches the beneficiaries, and women in particular.
- » consult with local women's organisations and women community leaders on developing the most secure ways to channel funding for civic and humanitarian activism into conflict areas.
- » put pressure on states to not use counter-terrorism laws as a pretext for not sending funding to local organisations working in highly militarised or repressive environments.

Good practice:

“The Global Fund for HIV/AIDS disburses \$110 billion per year, and is one of the most accountable governance systems out there, including a board comprised of Member States, UN Staff, and civil society, where civil society has a high influence.”
– Dean Peacock, Sonke Gender Justice, South Africa

“The UN has the financial and political resources, so they have the opportunity to make a difference on the ground. But to make that change on the ground they have to include the civil society organisations on the ground in the designing and implementation of that support.”
– Hajer Sharief, Libya

Funding for women's income-generation activities is not empowering

Participants report that UN programming for women is often based on stereotypes and low expectations, mostly concerned with small projects teaching women to knit and sew, or start-ups of small business or agricultural production. Participants explain that the end product of such funding is the increase of few individual women's household income. Yet, it does not enable economic empowerment for women as a group, and further perpetuates patriarchal power structures.

Participants also note that heavy and unequal responsibility for unpaid care work, such as child care, and the resulting structural inequality remains an issue left out of policies on women's economic empowerment and participation in the formal sector.

Recommendations

Representatives of UN agencies should:

- » fund programmes which train women in financial and project management.
- » prioritise investments in accessible, affordable and quality social infrastructure and essential services that reduce and redistribute women's unpaid care and domestic work, and that enable their full participation in the economy.
- » support adequate budgetary allocation to ensure social safety nets and innovative social protection floors.

4.3 WOMEN'S UNIQUE ROLE IN SECURING SUSTAINABLE PEACE

Women's participation in peace processes is not valued

Successful, sustainable peace depends on the degree of political will, social mobilisation, and inclusivity. Inclusivity entails the meaningful engagement of civil societies and local communities in the peace process, framing countries' national priorities through regular exchange with them.

Participants note that the UN's approach to including women in conflict affected contexts is not appropriate. For instance, one of the participants informs that a UN facilitated event required the participation of women coming from high-risk areas. The UN required these women to sign a waiver stating that the UN was not responsible for any incidents that occurred while the women were travelling.

When female participants speak about their experiences of participating in peace processes or in other decision-making fora, they quote men's responses in these fora: "no time for your gender analysis"; or "you are welcome to engage—but not here". Women's inclusion is almost always met with indifference, or even resistance.

The overwhelming conclusion participants are drawing is that if women are physically present in decision-making processes, they are merely included for political point scoring. This is the case both nationally and internationally. Furthermore, participants specify that "consultations" with women for programmes, policies, or peace agreements, which national governments and UN agencies often pride themselves on having had, are, in fact, pseudo-consultations. Firstly, the mechanism of consultation lacks effective transfer strategies that would systematically communicate results to relevant stakeholders. Secondly, consultation as a notion is not participation. The concept undermines any opportunities for real, sustained and meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes, programmes, and policies that affect them.

Participants also note that the international community consistently selects men for inclusion in high-level UN mediation teams. Women are underrepresented in high-level political appointments to pursue conflict diplomacy.

"At the Security Council, I have spoken, and everybody claps. But then it does not go anywhere. We are not there to be wallpaper!"
– Julienne Lusenge, Fund for Congolese Women, DRC

» Of 31 UN-led mediation processes between 1991 and 2011, only three were led by women as the chief mediator.
– UN Women

“UN Women's role was good in Colombia because it did more by doing less: it stepped back to create space for women civil society to do the work they were doing.”
– Katherine Ronderos,
Colombia

Recommendations

Representatives of UN agencies, including UN country teams, UN Special Envoys, and UN mediators, should:

- » ensure that peace processes are informed by women's experiences and perspectives on the ground to reflect national priorities, including the priorities of the local communities and the different groups within them.
- » support the implementation of a mechanism to ensure the population's effective and meaningful participation in the peace agreement's implementation.
- » ensure that every civil society actor has access to tools and information, including training programmes on the content of the agreement, and wide dissemination of informative videos, booklets and the like, including rural and remote areas of the country. States must ensure regular exchange with civil society and leaders within the community, and bring their input to the centre of the negotiation process.
- » support existing local women's coalitions and organisations, instead of creating duplicating platforms, and ensure their real meaningful participation in peace processes, without them being associated with militarised sides, including by establishing regular regional and national consultation processes with women's groups and peace leaders.
- » support establishing an explicit procedure for women to impact peace processes, as their leadership will set the conditions for their leadership in a political economy post-conflict.
- » acknowledge women as experts and knowledge providers, and recognise them as peace activists and women human rights defenders who have a mandate for peace.
- » break the stereotype that all women have consensus, and instead acknowledge their diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives, and make sure to represent those in decision-making fora.
- » ensure a balanced gender representation of mediators.
- » prioritise the UN's role as impartial facilitator and prevent guardianship and politicisation when mediating among national actors.

Neoliberal policies do not address conflicts' root causes

The political economy of peace processes is complex and must be understood in the context of both the political and economic actors, and their influence on decision-making, participation, and gender relations. This includes understanding the consequences of the strong influence of a neoliberal economic agenda in post-conflict recovery processes.

Participants note that the neoliberal economic model used in macroeconomic reforms and transition processes entails deregulation, austerity measures, and a reduction of social services, among other things. These reforms often perpetuate or even exacerbate structural inequality and decrease the ability of the government to fulfil its human rights obligations; they can therefore become a cause for continued conflict and an inherent obstacle to sustainable peace. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the reform agenda has turned social ownership into private ownership, with no transparency or public participation in the process. These trends are recognised to be occurring across the globe and are specifically pronounced in countries declared to be “post-conflict”.

Participants see the lack of a gender and human rights based approach to economic reforms in peace agreements and transition processes as a serious threat to peace. In fact, the notion that free-market and neoliberal models can “fix” peace is widespread, and neoliberal policies do not account for the distinct impact they have on women. Participants emphasise that participation in post-conflict recovery cannot only revolve around political aspects. Liberal peace and neoliberal approaches assume that you can divide the political and the economic, and that issues such as gender inequality and obstacles to sustainable peace can be addressed separately. At the international level, there is currently no alternative to neoliberalism, and there is very little room to challenge neoliberal programmes.

Part of this system of global and national political and economic decision-making, and influencing national macroeconomic policies and public finance at a global scale, are the International Financial Institutions (IFIs)—in particular, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Known for their neoliberal economic framework, participants question whether IFIs' advice, programmes and conditionalities are contributing to further socio-economic inequality, and therefore also to sustained gender inequality, without mechanisms for accountability and civil society participation.

Short-term projects created for women, but within a neoliberal agenda, do not create any change in the underlying structural inequalities. Such neoliberal programmes effectively prevent civil society—and even governments—envisioning and planning an alternative political and economic model that addresses the interconnectedness of institutional rules, policies, and inequality, including gender inequalities.

A feminist political economy analysis argues that socio-economic inequality is the basis of political inequality in terms of access and participation, and that these inequalities concentrate political power of the few, sustaining systems of gender inequality and exclusion, and favouring patriarchal values. Such analysis would allow scrutiny of the interrelationship of political and economic power and decision-making and how it impacts structural norms, values and institutional practices.

“In Bosnia, we see that creating peace from a neoliberal framework means an absence of a conflict analysis. The international community's idea that austerity and privatisation magically cures all is blind to effects of war.”
– Nela Porobić, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Recommendations

Representatives of UN agencies should:

- » act as a proactive conflict prevention body instead of a conflict management body.

To that end, they should:

- » support analyses of current dominant strategies and policy frameworks for economic reform and their role in perpetuating structural inequalities.
- » support international, national and locally-driven movements and platforms dealing with gender and economic justice and peace.
- » re-channel and increase resources to fund more policy-oriented research on women, peace and security, in an attempt to understand the economic drivers of conflict and peacebuilding.
- » transform peace processes from their current project-based approach to a long-term, inclusive, and gendered processes.
- » ensure that peace processes embody democratic inclusion, and support human rights and non-discrimination, including by rejecting neoliberal structural adjustment and investing in gender reparations, social safety nets, and gendered transitional justice.
- » ensure that women are not only at the table in peace negotiations, but also in political governance, in international processes, and in negotiations with IFIs such as the IMF.
- » push for state representatives to conduct gender and human rights impact assessments before accepting conditionalities, and to always adopt a rights-based approach when implementing economic re-structuring.
- » push for IFI representatives to ensure a women, peace and security perspective is included, and demand IFIs' gendered impact analysis of macro-economic reforms, especially the impact of conditionalities.

4.4 WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION IN HUMANITARIAN SPACES

Women's contribution in humanitarian contexts is not recognised

Women do not receive the recognition, support or resources to participate formally in humanitarian contexts. Women are predominantly perceived as victims or “passive beneficiaries,” say the participants, and highlight that such notion could not be further from the truth.

On the rare occasions where women's agency has been acknowledged, participants address the dangerous trend where women are praised for their “resilience”. In doing so, stakeholders exploit such discourse to shy away from providing any recognition and support to women's work, which poses serious risks to women's physical and mental well-being. Women are at the frontline providing humanitarian support, yet they do not fall into the “typical” notion of a humanitarian due to their informal participation.

Moreover, the rapid response to humanitarian crises and lack of contextualisation of humanitarian policies mean that work for women's rights is underfunded and de-prioritised.

In summary, the participants state that women's work and contribution in humanitarian contexts is unrecognised, unappreciated, and underfunded.

Recommendations

Representatives of UN agencies should:

» re-think humanitarian action beyond the boxes of classic humanitarian sectors (e.g., food, shelter) to recognise the holistic contribution of women-led organisations to humanitarian assistance and protection.

» challenge the depoliticisation of peace work with a gender lens to ensure women's meaningful participation in humanitarian spaces.

» re-imagine who is a humanitarian in order to re-balance the distribution of resources for humanitarian purposes.

» factor support for women-led organisations into humanitarian funding under the Grand Bargain.

“Women are addressing peace and security issues, breaking siege, mobilising convoys to ensure supplies, addressing violent extremism. Women identify early warning signs of radicalisation, they are first responders and provide medical support, yet they are not trusted with the necessary space for participation and resources to develop and continue their work.”

– Rasha Jarhum, Yemen

“In Syria, out of 2,000 individuals at senior positions in humanitarian organisations, only 25 of them are women, despite women's massive participation at the informal level.”

– Rola Hallam, CanDo

4.5 REVISITING WOMEN'S SECURITY

"Yemen was a defining moment. The Security Council is tasked with preventing war between Member States, but voted to enable one state to attack another. It has become the "Unsecurity Council" and there is a crisis of its legitimacy."
– Sanam Anderlini,
International Civil Society
Action Network

"The elephant in the room is arms trade: people are profiting from war. Until the international community connects the dots from arms to violence and takes action, we will not have peace."
– Madeleine Rees, WILPF
Secretary General

"Security Council supposedly gathers some of the most renowned security experts. However, what is missing is the perspective and experience of those on the ground, who live these wars and continue to work in a hope to bring peace one day."
– Hajer Sharief, Libya

Arms proliferation is a major obstacle to peace and to women's participation

Participants are concerned about heightened militarisation and power politics within the Security Council and among states, and about the Security Council's lack of neutrality.

The budget for peace processes or humanitarian aid is dwarfed by expenditure on the arms industry, which, in turn, is a cause of the need for humanitarian aid in the first place. Arms trade and arms proliferation has a distinct impact on women's rights and safety, and affects women's ability to participate in the public sphere.

Participants highlight that UN agencies, particularly the Security Council, do not prioritise disarmament, as they believe it is neither feasible nor realistic, and militarism is seen as the only response to security.

Participants raise the issue that if the Security Council uses the Responsibility to Protect doctrine (R2P), interventions, such as in Libya, prioritise militarisation over the doctrine's other pillars of prevention and protection of civilians from the abuse of sovereignty.

Furthermore, participants identify a particularly hindered access to the Security Council.

The implementation of a peace agreement requires meaningful and qualified participation of the whole population. However, peacekeeping operations are not adapted to the population's needs, report the participants from countries with peacekeeping operations.

Recommendations

Representatives of UN agencies, including the UN Security Council, should:

- » evaluate peacekeeping operations, have the courage to acknowledge if they have not worked, and seek alternatives.
- » clearly define the mandates of peacekeeping operations: purpose, mission, and duration.
- » for UN Security Council country visits, prioritise exchange with women organisations.
- » accept that militarism is not the only response to security; recognise women human rights defenders as the true bearers of the peace mandate, not the military.

» fundamentally reframe security away from militarised approaches to one based on human rights, sustainable development, and equality.

» make use of the Responsibility to Protect doctrine, and introduce a feminist perspective into its implementation, including shifting the emphasis to the pillars of prevention and protection, instead of intervention and militarism.

» to that end, ensure sufficient funding, exercise political pressure, and use the developing Responsibility to Protect doctrine to achieve protection and justice for civilians.

» publicly name and shame countries that supply arms to countries in conflict, with fragile contexts, or with a high prevalence of gender-based violence, and pressure them to stop doing so.

» pressure states to ratify, accede to, and implement the Arms Trade Treaty, along with other arms agreements, and pressure states to conduct transparent, comprehensive gender and human rights impact assessments before transferring weapons (this includes instances, amongst others, where there is a high prevalence of gender-based violence, reported cases of child soldiers etc.).

Widespread perception that women's participation in disarmament is unnecessary

There are multiple types of weapons; their impacts on women are either disproportionate or differentiated. Yet this is not always properly taken into consideration in the design, development or implementation of disarmament programmes and policies.

Although they are beneficiaries, women and their experiences are often excluded from these activities, largely because arms are considered as a tool of protection and intimately linked to masculine identities, and therefore fundamental in highly volatile security settings. As such, they tend to fall short in adequately addressing women's needs or experiences with arms.

Participants report that in national and multilateral fora, there is a common perception that arms and disarmament is the “realm of men”, and so women are rarely included in any discussions. Participants highlight the crucial role of donors in enhancing the role of women in disarmament.

Furthermore, participants raised the importance of the underlying economic factors and lack of employment opportunities that incentivise men and women to participate in conflict-related income-generating activities.

“The largest agency of the UN is the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), and there is a self-interest of keeping this part of the organisation large. It is therefore necessary to untangle the entrenched norms within the UN, and the political and economic interest of the organisation itself and its Member States. There are interests to continue war, highly economic benefits.”
– Medina Haeri, OAK Foundation

“DRC is the site of the largest UN peacekeeping operation. 20,000 men have been in the country for 20 years at a cost of around \$1 billion per year. These efforts have shown no result and have not succeeded to prevent war. Now is the time to evaluate and change the approach.”
– Julienne Lusenge, DRC

"Despite decades of strong evidence that women are most invested in disarmament and the fact that men use and value weapons in ways women do not, UN disarmament is seen as a man's process."
– Participant

Of 693 diplomats registered for the UNGA First Committee meeting in 2015, around 70% were men and 30% were women. Similarly, at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in 2015, 901 of the 1,226 registered diplomats were men (73.5%) and 325 women (26.5%).

Recommendations:

Representatives of UN agencies should:

- » increase or re-channel funding, both in building capacities around disarmament issues and around funding local initiatives that seek to foster peace based on human rights.
- » support designing alternative opportunities for livelihoods and jobs that do not incentivise proliferation and use of arms for economic security.
- » enable better participation of women UN delegations to multilateral disarmament meetings or in related programmes.
- » enhance women's role in disarmament, and prioritise women's participation when funding disarmament programmes or developing policies.

Good practice:

- » "Donors have asked demining organisations to have a gender component, which leads to more women meaningfully participating and generating income, making it empowering for them and useful for society as a whole. Women have become professionals on landmine clearance in many countries, such as Colombia, Lebanon or Laos, for example."
– Amelie Chayer, International Campaign to Ban Landmines

4.6 IMPLEMENTING WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

UN agencies are inconsistent in their approach to promoting and protecting women's human rights

Participants raised the fact that UN agencies often do not work consistently for the protection and promotion of (women's) human rights. One participant recounts how the UNDP in Iran provided funding to government-friendly non-governmental organisations to prepare a joint report for the Universal Periodic Review of Iran. This report provided only a positive assessment of the human rights situations. The same participant mentions that for the review of Iran under the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), the committee organised a briefing, at which local human rights defenders and UNICEF were present. She recounts that UNICEF's evaluation of Iran's implementation of the CRC was also entirely positive.

Participants question to what extent collaboration between UN agencies and governments is acceptable, if such collaboration takes place at the expense of denouncing violations or otherwise criticising governments.

Recommendations

Representatives of UN agencies should:

- » put pressure on states to develop, finance, and implement UN Security Council (UNSCR) 1325 National Action Plans with holistic agendas and meaningful participation of civil society throughout.
- » push states to ensure that national legislation is harmonised with ratified instruments (including through comprehensive and participatory gender budgeting).
- » pressure states to cooperate with UN human rights bodies, including by submitting reports to UN treaty monitoring bodies on time, and accepting requests for visits by UN Special Procedures and commissions of inquiry.
- » support (financially and otherwise) women's civil society organisations wishing to engage with UN human rights bodies and act on their recommendations, and develop effective strategies on improving this approach.
- » name and shame other states who do not implement ratified treaties, marginalise the voices of regressive states, and hold to account progressive states.
- » question to what extent collaboration of UN agencies with government-friendly NGOs and governments is acceptable, and evaluate such collaboration against how it is detrimental to the application of fundamental UN principles, the promotion of human rights, and to civil society.
- » explore the possibility of a fifth World Conference on Women in 2020, possibly focusing on implementation instead of re-opening commitments.

“The UN must adhere to recommendations by its treaty bodies! To do otherwise is hypocrisy.”
– Lisa Davis, MADRE

>> 5

WILPF'S CONVENING IN GENEVA

As a matter of principle, WILPF decided not to participate formally in the 61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61), which took place in New York, US, from 13-24 March 2017.

On 26-28 April 2017, WILPF therefore held a convening on women's meaningful participation in the UN system as a response to the exclusion of women advocates and activists.

The Convening took place inside the UN and at Palais Eynard, Geneva, and more than 150 people participated. Participants included women's rights and peace activists, civil society organisations, and representatives of Member States and UN agencies.

All the open sessions at the Convening were live-streamed through WILPF's Facebook-page in order to make the knowledge, recommendations and shared insights accessible to a broader audience. As a way to make the Convening more inclusive, the moderators at the panel discussions included questions asked by live-stream viewers, and people unable to attend the Convening thereby had the opportunity to engage in and contribute to the discussions.

List of countries:

<i>Australia</i>	<i>Greece</i>	<i>Palestine</i>
<i>Benin</i>	<i>Iraq</i>	<i>Senegal</i>
<i>Bosnia and Herzegovina</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>Serbia</i>
<i>Canada</i>	<i>Jordan</i>	<i>South Africa</i>
<i>Chad</i>	<i>Kenya</i>	<i>Sweden</i>
<i>Colombia</i>	<i>Kosovo</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>
<i>Croatia</i>	<i>Kyrgyzstan</i>	<i>Syria</i>
<i>Democratic Republic of the Congo</i>	<i>Lebanon</i>	<i>Turkey</i>
<i>Denmark</i>	<i>Libya</i>	<i>UK</i>
<i>Egypt</i>	<i>Macedonia</i>	<i>Ukraine</i>
<i>France</i>	<i>Malaysia</i>	<i>USA</i>
<i>Germany</i>	<i>Morocco</i>	<i>Yemen</i>
<i>Ghana</i>	<i>Netherlands</i>	<i>Zimbabwe</i>
	<i>Nigeria</i>	

ABOUT WILPF

WILPF is the oldest women's peace organisation in the world. With offices in Geneva and New York, and active national sections on every continent, WILPF brings together women from all around the world to work for peace and non-violent conflict resolutions, to end discrimination, and to promote political, economic and social justice for all.

WILPF was founded in 1915, and in 1948, the women-led organisation became one of the first NGOs to be granted consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Since its inception, WILPF has acted as a bridge between the UN and women's organisations around the world. WILPF has always seen it as an inevitable requirement to the multilateral system that it shall be guided by the people and the realities on the ground.

This access to ECOSOC is crucial for WILPF's advocacy as it allows the organisation to influence decision-makers at the highest international level by delivering statements, participating in negotiations and holding side events at the UN. Through the ECOSOC status, WILPF assists its sections and partners in bringing their experience and advocacy to the highest level. WILPF sees it as its finest duty to mediate global and local efforts in order to implement a holistic and transformative approach to human rights, gender equality and disarmament.

WILPF is, and has always been, a strong supporter of the UN, but only a UN which upholds its Charter and Human Rights law. A UN which builds and maintains peace. A UN which works for the people.

WILPF believes that an important missing ingredient for the UN to fulfil its Charter is women's meaningful participation. Women's voices, experiences and insights need to be both heard and acknowledged in decision-making processes. It is not just about counting women; it is about making women count.



"WILPF is known for its unique capacity and expertise in analysing the root causes of conflict through gender lenses and in accompanying feminist movements in their action for peace and justice for all."

– Michael Møller, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva

"As human rights defenders, we should speak the language of people in the communities we wish to serve."

– Randa Siniora, Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling, Palestine

"We must #ReclaimUN. For all its problems and failures, it is still all we have got to uphold universal human rights norms and standards."

– Everjoice Win, Zimbabwe

In 2017, the newly elected US Administration's—a UN host state—travel ban on people from first seven, then six, named countries led to the exclusion of several women advocates and activists at the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61), taking place annually in New York.

The shrinking space for women's voices at the UN has been an issue for a long time, and the happenings around CSW61 illuminated a serious structural problem. In order to guide the UN away from a slippery slope and back to its Charter, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) gathered more than 150 women's rights and peace activists from around the world in April 2017 to discuss how to make the UN more inclusive and make women count within the UN system.

This booklet is an outcome of the discussions that took place during the three days of WILPF's Convening in Geneva.





**WHAT MEMBER STATES CAN
DO TO ENSURE WOMEN'S
MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION
IN THE UN SYSTEM**





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JUNE, 2017

What Member States can do to ensure women's meaningful participation in the UN system

1st Edition

24 pp.

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Design and layout: Concept Machine

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INTRODUCTION



This year, the foundation and purpose of the 61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) was compromised and challenged by the travel ban introduced by the US Administration on 27 January 2017, which sought to ban entry to the US for people from Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. In addition to the ban on these countries, women from other countries in the Middle East (not subject to the ban), from countries in Central and South America, and from some countries in Africa, were also denied visas. They were thus denied the opportunity to let their voices be heard at CSW61 in New York. These unilateral actions by the US as the host state had a major impact on the ability of the UN to uphold the principles enunciated in the UN Charter, in human rights law, and indeed in the CSW. The situation vividly illustrated the vulnerability of UN processes to external decisions and shone a light on the absolute necessity of ensuring the meaningful and safe participation of women in the multilateral system more broadly. All this was, however, only the tip of the iceberg.

The shrinking space for civil society has been an issue for a long time. The travel ban compounded this, and to illuminate the seriousness of this issue, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) held a Convening in April 2017. More than 150 women's rights and peace activists from around the world gathered to discuss how to make the UN more inclusive and help it live up to the founding principles of its Charter. CSW61 was an eye-opener that illuminated a serious structural problem.

That structural problem is exemplified by the election of Saudi Arabia to the CSW. Saudi Arabia cannot promote women's rights globally, when it severely discriminates against women at home. Such absurdity endangers the credibility of the system. The UN was set up as a peace organisation and one that would promote respect for human rights, but that purpose has been subordinated to the geo-political concerns of its strongest members.

This booklet, **What Member States can do to ensure women's meaningful participation in the UN system**, draws from the discussions that took place during the three days of WILPF's Convening. It is designed specifically for Member State representatives and provides recommendations ranging from supporting women human rights defenders and women's organisations to what the UN Member States can do to improve women's participation in the UN system.

With growing nationalism, populism and militarism worldwide, and 46 recognised ongoing conflicts around the world, now is the time to make changes and rethink our current multilateral system.

» 2 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. AVENUES FOR TIMELY, ADEQUATE AND EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION

State representatives should:

- » Provide women activists' visas—to allow them to access the UN—easily and expeditiously, by following consistent, non-discriminatory, transparent procedures for visa applications, and prioritise holding meetings in accessible spaces at the UN that are open to civil society with early indication of these events for planning.
- » Ensure the composition of delegations to the UN reflects the diversity, perspectives and interests of the people at home.
- » Decline to elect governments which severely discriminate against women in their own territory to human rights bodies, and join civil society demands in removing Saudi Arabia from CSW.

2. LONG-TERM SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

State representatives should:

- » Support the Grand Bargain's target to provide 25 % of global humanitarian funding to local and national responders by 2020 and to increase multi-year funding.
- » Substantially increase financial resources for grassroots women human rights defenders and peace activists, including through aid dedicated to advancing gender equality, and civil society inclusive funds. Funding should be geared directly towards women's political work for peace instead of channelling funds through International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) or UN agencies. This includes supporting participation and advocacy efforts of local women's leaders in the international human rights procedures, and paying particular attention to marginalised women's groups.
- » Consult with local organisations on developing the best and most secure ways to channel funding for civic and humanitarian activism into conflict areas instead of using anti-terror laws as a pretext for not send funding to local organisations working in highly militarised environments

3. ENSURING IMPLEMENTATION OF WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

State representatives should:

- » Develop and implement National Action Plans, submit national reports to human rights mechanisms on time, and ensure that national legislation is harmonised with ratified instruments.
- » Ensure access to all information needed by civil society organisations to engage in country reviews by UN mechanisms and work with women's civil society organisations to act on recommendations by human rights bodies, and develop effective strategies on improving this approach.

4. POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT THAT VALUES WOMEN'S CIVIL SOCIETY WORK

State representatives should:

- » Encourage and value women's participation and contribution as providers of expert knowledge in peace processes, humanitarian spaces and national and international decision-making fora.
- » Ensure safety, and no reprisals against women human rights defenders and peace activists by their government.
- » Ensure strong partnerships and real and meaningful dialogue with women's civil society on the ground and be trained on gender and harmful concepts of masculinity.
- » Ensure women's leadership from the beginning in peace processes, including by establishing explicit procedures for women to impact the decision-making process and by establishing regional and national advisory bodies of women's peace leaders.
- » Provide regular monitoring and follow-up to transparently share impact and rationales for decisions taken.
- » Provide effective gender budgeting on all aspects of national and international foreign policy by including gender impact assessments.
- » Re-consider militarism as the only response to security, and recognise women human rights defenders as the true bearers of the peace mandate—not the military.
- » Ratify, accede to, and implement the Arms Trade Treaty, along with other arms agreements, and conduct transparent, comprehensive gender and human rights impact assessments before transferring weapons.
- » Design alternative opportunities for livelihoods and jobs that do not incentivise proliferation and use of arms for economic security, and prioritise women's participation in disarmament policies.
- » Rethink neoliberalism as an economic approach to fragile post-context situations and ensure that peace processes embody democratic inclusion, support for human rights and non-discrimination, including by rejecting neoliberal structural adjustment and investing in gender reparations, social safety nets, and gendered transitional justice.

At WILPF's Convening [the Convening], participants from 40 countries discussed how to reclaim the UN as a peace organisation and bring it back to its Charter. A large number of women's groups and civil society organisations (CSOs) were represented, and participants shared their insights, experiences and ideas for a path forward. The discussions during the Convening resulted in a number of recommendations useful for Member State representatives.

>> 3

WOMEN IN THE FIELD OF PEACE AND SECURITY

Women's experiences during and after war and conflict differ from those of men. Women's real and meaningful participation in the debates within the UN system is therefore a necessity in order to obtain a nuanced and correct picture of what is needed to prevent and resolve conflicts, rebuild society post-conflict, and ensure sustainable peace.

However, it is also important to remain aware that women are not a homogeneous group. Needs, issues and experiences vary depending on the context, culture and country, and having an inclusive approach is therefore crucial.

Women human rights defenders face serious risks

*"We need to transform violent masculinities to end patriarchy and advance peace."
– Anna Möller Loswick,
Sweden*

Patriarchy has no specific religion or culture. It appears in all nations and cultures and affects political processes and decision-making at all levels. Patriarchal oppression is amplified during conflict, and militarism imposes and strengthens negative masculine identity. This increases the risks women face during conflict due to the emergence of various forms of violence, often including organised sexual violence and the use of gender-based violence as a tactic of war.

Challenging patriarchal values, inequality, gender stereotypes and sexism is not an easy task, and it often comes with high personal risks for peace activists and human rights defenders on the ground. Participants at WILPF's Convening report that women activists' morals, independence and legitimacy are often questioned. Many women who work within the field of peace building and conflict resolution face certain risks and obstacles solely because of their gender. They are likely to experience gender-based and sexual violence, harassment, pressure and attacks. It is common to experience hate speech and threats, and many women's organisations have had their websites hacked or closed down. One participant also recounts that because women activists are often described as dishonourable, their children have been taken away.

Barriers to meaningful participation in decision-making

*"So often in conflict women are 'instrumentalised' but their voices are not heard."
– Laila Alodaat, WILPF*

Women human rights defenders and peace activists operate in a domain that historically has been seen as male. Unfortunately, it is still perceived as such. The idea that men are the protectors and women are the victims is still strong in narratives and discourses about conflict, its prevention and resolution. Instead of being considered as experts or knowledge providers, women are seen as tokens or only allowed to participate in processes where they have no real influence and where the agendas have been decided on beforehand. They have to constantly prove themselves to be "qualified" to participate in political fora.

A further obstacle to women's meaningful participation is the prevalent stereotype that all women have one voice. The assumption that there is a monolithic women's rights position leads to one woman being assigned to represent one salient identity characteristic. This approach justifies having few women in decision-making fora, as these few are considered to be a representation of all women.

Stereotypes of women as victims and uncritical advocates for peace, combined with a strict division of labour in the public and private spheres, prevent women from entering official peace and post-conflict reconstruction processes.

Women's meaningful participation is essential to achieving sustainable peace

Excluding women from peace processes, peace agreements and post-conflict reconstruction efforts has severe consequences—not least because it prevents the realisation of real and sustainable peace. Research shows that there is a strong connection between the inclusion of women in peace processes and a more stable, longer-lasting peace. Today, we see a tendency to give women symbolic roles in internationally driven processes, such as adding a woman to the peace table, or engaging women outside the formal peace talks, such as in the recent Yemen talks, without any formal role or follow-up. This looks good on state representatives' records, but it has no real impact. Women need to be actively contributing members of the peace process. As stated by the participants at WILPF's Convening: It is not 'political correctness' for women to participate; it is common sense.

In a time when there is compelling research documenting that women's participation is crucial in achieving real and sustainable peace, it is more important than ever for Member States to take concrete actions to ensure women play the fulsome role that is demanded, by women, by law and by common sense. It starts with recognition of agency and the vital roles played by women in-country; it needs to be reflected in the political processes nationally and internationally, and means full and effective inclusion in peace processes, in peace agreements, and in post-conflict governance structures. It is incumbent on states to insist that the UN mediators ensure this happens.

"In a survey of 1,200+ people, we found that different groups had different security issues. Women are not all the same."

– Hajer Sharief, Libya

"There will never be proper peace unless there are women at every step of the way."

– Julienne Lusenge, DRC

When women are included in peace processes there is a 20% increase in the probability of an agreement lasting 2 years. There is a 35% increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least 15 years.

– UN Women

>> 4

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STATE REPRESENTATIVES

4.1 AVENUES FOR WOMEN'S TIMELY, ADEQUATE, AND EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE UN SYSTEM

Women activists' freedom of movement from the Global South is restricted, including denial of visa

The issue of activists being denied visas, lately brought into the spotlight by the US Administration, extends far beyond the US. For instance, the Secretary General of WILPF Cameroon could not attend WILPF's Convening in Geneva, Switzerland, as she was denied her visa without being given any rational explanation.

Multilateral fora provide an opportunity to bring local voices to the international level, and allow activists to exchange experiences and build lasting relationships amongst each other, with State representatives and with UN officials. Preparations to attend these fora, including the visa application process, are both resource- and time-consuming.

Procedures followed by embassies of the same country are sometimes inconsistent.

Denial of visas marginalises and isolates human rights defenders, as it effectively prevents them participating at the international level.

Travel bans, imposed by host countries, such as by the US Administration and women's activists' home countries in the MENA region, pose further obstacles to women's freedom of movement and ability to participate.

Recommendations

State representatives, working in Permanent Missions, should:

- >> follow consistent, non-discriminatory, transparent procedures for visa applications.
- >> ensure that women's participation and engagement in UN mechanisms and forums can be facilitated rapidly and efficiently.
- >> reflect on how passport privilege keeps local voices out of the UN.

State representatives should:

- >> ensure that visas are granted to women human rights defenders that allow them to participate in UN and other multilateral fora.
- >> prioritise holding meetings in accessible spaces at the UN that are open to civil society with early indication of these events for planning.

Good practice

- » Participants report that the United Nations Development Group facilitates visa applications. For instance, the Women's Major Group of women civil society vouches for each other to enhance visa access
- » The European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders set out that Permanent Missions should receive and support human rights defenders and ensure their visible recognition through the use of, inter alia, invitations.
- » State representatives, including representatives of Permanent Missions, should seek to develop guidelines to protect women human rights defenders in their home countries and to ensure their facilitated access to international fora, similar to Norway's guide to support human rights defenders or the Swiss Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders.

State representatives are disconnected from women activists' perspectives

In many countries, civil society actors do not have easy access, or have no access at all, to State representatives in their own country. Yet, representatives may be more accessible outside the country, in UN fora. However, even in international meetings, particularly at the UN in New York, civil society faces difficulties in accessing UN rooms and delegations. Participants at WILPF's Convening report that meetings are held in UN facilities inaccessible to civil society, or which oblige civil society to leave after 6.00 pm. Furthermore, participants observe disparities between political and policy positions held by State representatives in-country and those of Permanent Missions to the UN. According to the participants, there is, however, often a shared lack of interest by State representatives and delegates for including gender and grassroots perspectives into their work, or a lack of knowledge about how to do so.

Such disconnect between representatives of countries and the experience and analysis of women NGOs prevents the realities of women's lives being brought into the international domain and undermines the stated objectives of the institutions.

Good practice

- » In South Africa, the NGO Sonke Gender Justice regularly offers—and is sought out to provide—capacity building opportunities to government counterparts. As a key partner, the government supports Sonke's MenCare Campaign to promote gender-equitable parenting and allows gender-transformative fatherhood groups to operate in many state health facilities across the country. Government leaders have spoken publicly in support of the campaign.

“UN needs an upgrade – we need to adapt to current situations on the ground, remove barriers and acknowledge crucial actors.”
– Global Network of Women
Peacebuilders

Under Resolution 1996/31, the NGO Committee is obliged to meet with ECOSOC accredited organisations before each of its sessions and at other times when necessary.

Recommendations

State representatives in-country should:

- » be willing to meet with civil society on a regular basis and should be ready to listen and to hear people's perspectives and experiences.
- » ensure strong partnerships and meaningful dialogue with civil society.
- » request women's civil society organisations to provide information directly to States when they are undergoing the review under international human rights mechanisms.
- » provide regular monitoring and follow-up to transparently share impact and rationales for decisions taken.
- » ensure that government staff are trained on gender and on traditional and harmful concepts of masculinity.

Members of Permanent Missions and State representatives should:

- » ensure the composition of delegations to the UN reflect the diversity, perspectives and interests of the people at home.
- » push to allow civil society organisations to vote in the election of important human rights bodies' committees or commissions, such as the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) or the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).
- » ensure, and advocate for, facilitated access for civil society to UN facilities and delegations.
- » refrain from electing States to the NGO Committee which curtail civil society work.
- » put themselves forward as candidates for the NGO Committee only if they have a strong commitment to defend civil society's work.

4.2 LONG-TERM SUPPORT AND RESOURCES FOR WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

Lack of sustained funding impacts women activists' ability to engage with the UN system

Engaging with UN human rights mechanisms, such as submitting a shadow report to the CEDAW Committee, requires financial and human resources. Participants state that because of scarce funding, they are often faced with the choice of preparing reports to UN human rights mechanisms, or continuing their day-to-day work. Moreover, the travel costs associated with participating in a UN meeting are often unaffordable to grassroots activists.

Such challenges are heightened for marginalised groups, or groups that face multiple forms of discrimination, such as indigenous women and LGBTQI individuals. Participants also point to regional disparities with respect to funding. For instance, trans- or intersex advocates living in Western Europe are underfunded, as donor countries perceive them to live and work in “generally” privileged and safe regions.

Recommendations

State representatives should:

- » demonstrate political will to ensure women's meaningful participation by supporting (financially and otherwise) the participation and advocacy efforts of local women's leaders in the international human rights procedures, paying particular attention to marginalised women groups.
- » ensure access to all information needed for civil society organisations to engage in country reviews by UN mechanisms.

Lack of sustained funding poses obstacles to the work of women's organisations

According to the participants, there is a serious lack of funding for organisations working on the ground. Available resources are disproportionately channelled towards state or UN agencies or International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), and tend to focus on service delivery. The UN receives funding, allows for sub-granting to other UN agencies, and finally distributes smaller sub-grants to actors on the ground delivering the services. This system is ineffective and inefficient, creates barriers, and (indirectly) questions local organisations' capacity to absorb funding and resources.

Furthermore, participants note that their own governments do not provide sufficient funding for civil society organisations, and women's organisations remain under-funded at best.

According to research conducted by the Global Actions for Trans Equality (GATE), trans groups in high-income countries report ineligibility for funding.

*“In Syria, 75 % of the humanitarian work is being done by local organisations, but they only receive 1 % of the foreign aid funding.”
– Rola Hallam, CanDo*

There is a lack of trust in the skills and expertise of grassroots organisations. The donor community also tends to provide short-term grants which are restricted to six months or one year. Such “compartmentalised” funding prevents long-term, strategic thinking and political commitment, as grassroots organisations have to spend long hours writing project proposals and project narrative reports instead of focusing on their actual work.

Policies linked to counter-terrorism agendas, including Countering Terrorism Financing, and increased militarised security, have had a catastrophic impact on grassroots organisations around the world. These rules have been designed and implemented in a way that fails to take account of the challenging settings under which grassroots organisations in conflict countries need to survive and operate. Moreover, the rapid response to humanitarian crises and lack of contextualisation of humanitarian policies mean that work for women's rights is underfunded and de-prioritised.

Recommendations

Under the “Grand Bargain”, 22 member States and 28 UN agencies or international organisations have committed to provide 25 % of global humanitarian funding to local and national responders by 2020 and to increase multi-year funding.

State representatives of countries that have not committed to the Grand Bargain's target should:

- » push to commit and support this initiative.

State representatives of donor countries that have committed to the Grand Bargain's target should:

- » ensure the target is achieved and continue to work to have grassroots organisations recognised for their contribution and financially supported by other States.

- » directly fund local organisations that holistically address the needs of women on the ground.

- » substantially increase funding for grassroots women human rights defenders and peace activists instead of channelling funds through INGOs or UN agencies. This should include aid dedicated to advancing gender equality and civil society inclusive funds. It should comprise a two-part approach that includes gender assessment prior to the project, and involving women in the design of any project.

- » be willing to be trained by local organisations on local priorities, and adapt funding priorities accordingly.

- » consult with local organisations and communities on finding and developing the best and most secure ways to channel funding for civic and humanitarian activism into those conflict areas instead of using anti-terror laws as a pretext for not send funding to local organisations working in highly militarised environments.

Funding for women's income-generation activities is not empowering

Participants report that foreign programming for women is often based on stereotypes and low expectations, mostly concerned with small projects teaching women to knit and sew, or start-ups of small business or agricultural production. Participants explain that the end product of such funding is the increase of few individual women's household income. Yet, it does not enable economic empowerment for women as a group, and further perpetuates patriarchal power structures.

Child care and the resulting structural inequality remains an issue left out of policies on women's economic empowerment and participation in the formal sector.

Recommendations

Donor countries and State representatives, ministries and local authorities should:

- » fund programmes which train women on financial and project management.
- » prioritise investments in accessible, affordable and quality social infrastructure and essential services that reduce and redistribute women's unpaid care and domestic work, and that enable their full participation in the economy.
- » ensure adequate budgetary allocation to ensure social safety nets and innovative social protection floors.

4.3 WOMEN'S UNIQUE ROLE IN SECURING SUSTAINABLE PEACE

Women's participation in peace processes is not valued

Successful, sustainable peace depends on the degree of political will, social mobilisation and inclusivity. Inclusivity entails the meaningful engagement of civil societies and local communities in the peace process, framing countries' national priorities through regular consultations.

The implementation of a peace agreement requires meaningful and qualified participation of the whole population. Peacekeeping missions and other programmes and policies in-country are not adapted to the population's wishes and needs, report the participants from countries with peacekeeping missions and operations.

When female participants speak about their experiences of participating in peace processes or in other decision-making fora, they quote men's responses in these fora: "no time for your gender analysis"; or "you are welcome to engage – but not here". Women's inclusion is almost always met with indifference, or even resistance.

The overwhelming conclusion drawn by the participants is that if women are physically present in decision-making processes, they are merely included for political point-scoring. This is the case both nationally and internationally. Furthermore, participants specify that "consultations" with women for programmes, policies or peace agreements, which national governments and UN agencies often pride themselves on having had, are in fact pseudo-consultations. Firstly, the mechanism of consultation lacks effective transfer strategies that would systematically communicate results to relevant stakeholders. Secondly, consultation as a notion is not participation. The concept undermines any opportunities for real, sustained and meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes, programmes and policies that affect them.

Recommendations

Donor countries and governments in transitional contexts should:

- » ensure that peace processes reflect national priorities which are informed by individuals' experiences and perspectives on the ground through institutionalising procedures for regular exchange with civil society and leaders within the community.
- » implement a mechanism to ensure the population's qualified and meaningful participation in the peace agreement's implementation.
- » ensure that every civil society actor has access to tools and information, including training programmes on the content of the agreement, dissemination of informative videos, booklets and the like, including to rural and remote areas of the country.

» support existing local women coalitions and organisations and ensure their real meaningful participation in peace processes and beyond, without them being associated with militarised sides, including by establishing regional and national advisory bodies of women's peace leaders.

» support establishing an explicit procedure for women to impact peace processes, as their leadership will set the conditions for their leadership in a political economy post-conflict.

» to that end, acknowledge women as experts and knowledge providers, and recognise them as peace activists and women human rights defenders who have a mandate for peace.

» break the stereotype that all women have consensus, and instead acknowledge their diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives, and make sure to represent those in decision-making fora.

» ensure that women are not only at the table in peace negotiations, but also in political governance, in international processes, and in negotiations with International Financial Institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

» provide effective gender budgeting on all aspects of national and international foreign policy by including gender impact assessments and by including women in project design, implementation and follow-up.

Member States of the Security Council should:

» clearly define Peacekeeping Operations mandates: purpose, mission, duration.

Neoliberal policies do not address conflicts' root causes

The political economy of peace processes is complex and must be understood in the context of both the political and economic actors, and their influence on decision-making, participation and gender relations. This includes understanding the consequences of the strong influence of a neoliberal economic agenda in post-conflict recovery processes.

Participants note that the neoliberal economic model used in macroeconomic reforms and transition processes entails deregulation, austerity measures and a reduction of social services, among other things. These reforms often perpetuate structural inequality and decrease the ability of the government to fulfil its human rights obligations, and can therefore become a cause for continued conflict and an inherent obstacle to sustainable peace. For example, in Bosnia, the reform agenda has turned social ownership into private ownership, with no transparency or public participation in the process. These trends are recognised to be occurring across the globe and are specifically pronounced in countries declared to be "post-conflict".

"DRC is the site of the largest UN peacekeeping operation. 20.000 men have been in the country for 20 years at a cost of around \$1 billion per year. These efforts have shown no result and have not succeeded to prevent war. Now is the time for the contributing countries to evaluate and change their approach."
– Julienne Lusenge, DRC

Participants see the lack of a human rights based approach to economic reforms in peace agreements and transition processes as a serious threat to peace. In fact, the notion that free-market and neoliberal models can “fix” peace is widespread, and neoliberal policies do not account for the distinct impact they have on women. Participants emphasise that participation in post-conflict recovery cannot only revolve around political aspects. Liberal peace and neoliberal approaches assume that you can divide the political and the economic, and that issues such as gender inequality and obstacles to sustainable peace can be addressed separately. At the international level, there is currently no alternative to neoliberalism, and there is very little room to challenge neoliberal programmes.

Short-term projects created for women, but within a neoliberal agenda, do not create any change in the underlying structural inequalities. Such neoliberal projects effectively prevent civil society, and even governments, envisioning and planning an alternative political and economic model that addresses the interconnectedness of institutional rules, policies and inequality, including gender inequalities.

A feminist political economy analysis argues that socio-economic inequality is the basis of political inequality in terms of access and participation, and that these inequalities concentrate political power of the few, sustaining systems of gender inequality and exclusion, and favouring patriarchal values. Such analysis would allow scrutiny of the interrelationship of political and economic power and decision-making and how it impacts structural norms, values and institutional practices.

Recommendations

State representatives, representatives of Permanent Missions, donor countries and State representatives in transitional contexts should:

- » analyse the current dominant strategies and policy frameworks for economic reform and their role in perpetuating structural inequalities.
- » support international, national and locally-driven movements and platforms dealing with gender and economic justice and peace.
- » re-channel and increase resources to fund more policy-oriented research on Women, Peace and Security in an attempt to understand the economic drivers of conflict and peacebuilding.
- » transform peace processes from their current project-based approach to a long-term, inclusive and gendered processes.

State representatives seeking or receiving International Financial Institutions' (IFIs) funding should:

- » conduct gender and human rights impact assessments before accepting conditionalities, and always adopt a rights-based approach when implementing economic re-structuring.

“In Bosnia, we see that creating peace from a neoliberal framework means an absence of a conflict analysis. The international community's idea that austerity and privatisation magically cures all is blind to effects of war.”
– Nela Porobić, Bosnia and Herzegovina

State representatives, including those in IFIs, should:

» ensure a women, peace and security perspective is included and demand IFIs' gendered impact analysis of macro-economic reforms, especially the impact on conditionalities.

4.4 WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION IN HUMANITARIAN SPACES

Women's contribution in humanitarian contexts is not recognised

Women do not receive the recognition or financial and resource support to participate formally in humanitarian contexts. Women are predominantly perceived as victims or “passive beneficiaries,” say the participants, and highlight that such a notion could not be further from the truth.

If women's agency is acknowledged, participants address the dangerous trend that women are being praised for their 'resilience'. In doing so, stakeholders exploit such discourse to shy away from providing any recognition and support to women's work, which poses serious risks to women's physical and mental well-being. Women are at the frontline providing humanitarian support, yet they do not fall into the “typical” notion of a humanitarian due to their informal participation.

In summary, the participants state that women's work and contribution in humanitarian contexts is unrecognised, unappreciated and underfunded.

Recommendations

Donor countries and State representatives should:

» re-think humanitarian action beyond the boxes of classic humanitarian sectors (e.g., food, shelter) to recognise the holistic contribution of women-led organisations to humanitarian assistance and protection.

» challenge the depoliticisation of peace work with a gender lens to ensure women's meaningful participation in humanitarian spaces.

» re-imagine who is a humanitarian in order to re-balance the distribution of resources for humanitarian purposes.

» factor support for women-led organisations into humanitarian funding under the Grand Bargain.

“Women are addressing peace and security issues, breaking siege, mobilising convoys to ensure supplies, addressing violent extremism. Women identify early warning signs of radicalization, they are first responders and provide medical support, yet they are not trusted with the necessary space for participation and resources to develop and continue their work.”

– Rasha Jarhum, Yemen

“In Syria, out of 2,000 individuals at senior positions in humanitarian organisations, only 25 of them are women, despite women's massive participation at the informal level.”

– Rola Hallam, CanDo

4.5 REVISITING WOMEN'S SECURITY

Arms proliferation is a major obstacle to peace and to women's participation

Participants are concerned about heightened militarisation and power politics within the Security Council and among States, and about the Security Council's lack of neutrality. The budget for peace processes or humanitarian aid is dwarfed by expenditure on the arms industry, which, in turn, is a cause of the need for humanitarian aid in the first place. Arms trade and arms proliferation has a distinct impact on women's rights and safety, and affects women's ability to participate in the public sphere. Yet States preach peace but continue to buy and sell weapons; militarism is seen as the only response to security.

Moreover, participants highlight that donor countries and national governments do not prioritise disarmament, as they believe such thing is neither feasible nor realistic. Participants raise that if states use the Responsibility to Protect Doctrine (R2P) to intervene, interventions, such as in Libya, prioritise militarisation over the doctrine's other pillars of prevention and protection of civilians from the abuse of sovereignty.

Recommendations

State representatives of States exporting arms should:

- » “walk the talk”; ratify, accede to, and implement the Arms Trade Treaty, along with other arms agreements, and conduct transparent, comprehensive gender and human rights impact assessments before transferring weapons (this includes instances, amongst others, where there is a high prevalence of gender-based violence, reported cases of child soldiers etc.).

- » stop exporting weapons to non-state actors, and in the long-term, stop producing and selling arms altogether.

- » fundamentally reframe security away from militarised approaches to one based on human rights, sustainable development and equality.

State representatives, including of Permanent Missions and Member States of the Security Council, should:

- » publicly name and shame countries that supply arms to countries in conflict, with fragile contexts or with a high prevalence of gender-based violence, and pressure them to stop doing so.

- » recognise women human rights defenders as the true bearers of the peace mandate—not the military.

- » States should make use of R2P doctrine, and introduce a feminist perspective into the implementation, including shifting the emphasis into the pillars of prevention and protection, instead of intervention and militarism.

“The elephant in the room is arms trade: people are profiting from war. Until the international community connects the dots from arms to violence and takes action, we will not have peace.”
– Madeleine Rees, WILPF Secretary General

» to that end, ensure sufficient funding, exercise political pressure, and use the developing doctrine R2P to achieve protection and justice for civilians.

Widespread perception that women's participation in disarmament is unnecessary

Across many types of weapons, the impacts on women are either disproportionate or differentiated. Yet this is not always properly taken into consideration in the design, development or implementation of disarmament programmes and policies.

Although they are beneficiaries, women and their experiences are often excluded from these activities, largely because, on a national level, arms are considered as a tool of protection and intimately linked to masculine identities, therefore fundamental in highly volatile security settings. As such, they tend to fall short in adequately addressing women's needs or experiences with arms.

Participants report that in national and multilateral fora, there is a common perception that arms and disarmament is the “realm of men”, and so women are rarely included in any discussions.

Furthermore, participants address underlying economic factors and lack of employment opportunities that incentivise men and women to participate in conflict-related income-generating activities.

Recommendations

Donor countries and all governments, including in transitional contexts, should:

- » increase or re-channel funding, both in building capacities around disarmament issues and around local initiatives that seek to foster peace based on human rights.
- » design alternative opportunities for livelihoods and jobs that do not incentivise proliferation and use of arms for economic security.
- » enable better participation of women in their delegations to disarmament meetings or in related programmes.

Donor countries should:

- » enhance women's role in disarmament, and prioritise women's participation when funding disarmament programmes or developing policies.

Of 693 diplomats registered for the UNGA First Committee meeting in 2015, around 70% were men and 30% were women. Similarly, at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in 2015, 901 of the 1.226 registered diplomats were men (73.5%) and 325 women (26.5%).

4.6 IMPLEMENTING WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

State representatives are inconsistent in promoting and protecting women's human rights

*"Your statements do not prevent women from dying."
– Activist, Libya*

States' lack of implementation of international human rights treaties remains a significant concern, including because of its impact on women's meaningful participation. States do not act upon treaty bodies' or Charter bodies' recommendations, and fail to submit national reports in time. Participants highlight States' double standards, publically proclaiming to be advocating for women's rights, and ratifying international conventions, but not implementing any of these obligations, or taking actions, such as promoting militarised approaches, which run against promotion of women's rights.

Participants urge to move from diplomacy to action.

Recommendations

State representatives should:

- » develop and implement National Action Plans and submit national reports to human rights mechanisms on time.
- » ensure that national legislation is harmonised with ratified instruments.
- » work with women's civil society organisations to act on recommendations by human rights bodies and develop effective strategies on improving this approach.
- » name and shame other States who do not implement ratified treaties, and marginalise the voices of regressive States and hold to account progressive States.

WILPF'S CONVENING IN GENEVA

As a matter of principle, WILPF decided not to participate formally in the 61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61), which took place in New York, US, from 13-24 March 2017.

On 26-28 April 2017, WILPF therefore held a convening on women's meaningful participation in the UN system as a response to the exclusion of women advocates and activists.

The Convening took place inside the UN and at Palais Eynard, Geneva, and more than 150 people participated. Participants included women's rights and peace activists, civil society organisations, and representatives of Member States and UN agencies.

All the open sessions at the Convening were live-streamed through WILPF's Facebook-page in order to make the knowledge, recommendations and shared insights accessible to a broader audience. As a way to make the Convening more inclusive, the moderators at the panel discussions included questions asked by live-stream viewers, and people unable to attend the Convening thereby had the opportunity to engage in and contribute to the discussions.

List of countries:

<i>Australia</i>	<i>Greece</i>	<i>Palestine</i>
<i>Benin</i>	<i>Iraq</i>	<i>Senegal</i>
<i>Bosnia and Herzegovina</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>Serbia</i>
<i>Canada</i>	<i>Jordan</i>	<i>South Africa</i>
<i>Chad</i>	<i>Kenya</i>	<i>Sweden</i>
<i>Colombia</i>	<i>Kosovo</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>
<i>Croatia</i>	<i>Kyrgyzstan</i>	<i>Syria</i>
<i>Democratic Republic of the Congo</i>	<i>Lebanon</i>	<i>Turkey</i>
<i>Denmark</i>	<i>Libya</i>	<i>UK</i>
<i>Egypt</i>	<i>Macedonia</i>	<i>Ukraine</i>
<i>France</i>	<i>Malaysia</i>	<i>USA</i>
<i>Germany</i>	<i>Morocco</i>	<i>Yemen</i>
<i>Ghana</i>	<i>Netherlands</i>	<i>Zimbabwe</i>
	<i>Nigeria</i>	

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ABOUT WILPF

“WILPF is known for its unique capacity and expertise in analysing the root causes of conflict through gender lenses and in accompanying feminist movements in their action for peace and justice for all.”

– Michael Møller, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva

“The voices of the people on the ground have been missing. Especially the voices of women.”

– Hajer Sharief, Libya

“We must #ReclaimUN. For all its problems and failures, it is still all we have got to uphold universal human rights norms and standards.”

– Everjoice Win, Zimbabwe

WILPF is the oldest women's peace organisation in the world. With offices in Geneva and New York, and active national sections on every continent, WILPF brings together women from all around the world to work for peace and non-violent conflict resolutions, to end discrimination, and to promote political, economic and social justice for all.

WILPF was founded in 1915, and in 1948, the women-led organisation became one of the first NGOs to be granted consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Since its inception, WILPF has acted as a bridge between the UN and women's organisations around the world. WILPF has always seen it as an inevitable requirement to the multilateral system that it shall be guided by the people and the realities on the ground.

This access to ECOSOC is crucial for WILPF's advocacy as it allows the organisation to influence decision-makers at the highest international level by delivering statements, participating in negotiations and holding side events at the UN. Through the ECOSOC status, WILPF assists its sections and partners in bringing their experience and advocacy to the highest level. WILPF sees it as its finest duty to mediate global and local efforts in order to implement a holistic and transformative approach to human rights, gender equality and disarmament.

WILPF is, and has always been, a strong supporter of the UN, but only a UN which upholds its Charter and Human Rights law. A UN which builds and maintains peace. A UN which works for the people.

WILPF believes that an important missing ingredient for the UN to fulfil its Charter is women's meaningful participation. Women's voices, experiences and insights need to be both heard and acknowledged in decision-making processes. It is not just about counting women; it is about making women count.

In 2017, the newly elected US Administration's—a UN host state—travel ban on people from first seven, then six, named countries led to the exclusion of several women advocates and activists at the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61), taking place annually in New York.

The shrinking space for women's voices at the UN has been an issue for a long time, and the happenings around CSW61 illuminated a serious structural problem. In order to guide the UN away from a slippery slope and back to its Charter, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) gathered more than 150 women's rights and peace activists from around the world in April 2017 to discuss how to make the UN more inclusive and make women count within the UN system.

This booklet is an outcome of the discussions that took place during the three days of WILPF's Convening in Geneva.

