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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women
and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled
“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for
the twenty-first century”**

Statement submitted by Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

We, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (the League), on the centenary of our foundation, call for bold initiatives for peace to be reignited. We will convene in The Hague in April 2015 for our historic 100th anniversary and "Women's Power to Stop War" conference to address root causes of conflict and strategies for sustainable peace based on justice, equality and demilitarization.

Militarization and cultures of militarism are double-edged swords against peace: with one hand, they exacerbate violence; with the other, they raid the coffers of peace. Militarism, as a way of thought and system of power, dictates the use of violence rather than inclusive dialogue. Conflict and militarization differently and disproportionately affect women and girls. Military spending, one aspect of militarism, remains out of control at \$1.7 trillion. This is the equivalent of over 600 years of the core annual United Nations budget. The weapon industry, another aspect of militarism, continues to profit from war. Six countries export 74 per cent of the world's weapons: the United States, Russia, Germany, United Kingdom, China and France. This cannot be silenced or ignored. Such emphasis on military spending and arms production is not the path to a culture of peace for which we have been striving.

Pervasive patriarchy — or the subordination of women by men in state, community and family — is perpetuated by the social shaping of men and women into contrasted, unequal and limiting gender identities of violent masculinities and compliant femininities. The use of ideologies and religion by state and non-state actors, especially militant groups, further reinforces patriarchal traditions and results in the exploitation of women and girls. Real and lasting peace cannot be attained until patriarchy is replaced by principles of equality, dignity and respect.

The League highlights the complexity and range of challenges facing our members and partners in national contexts from Syria to Palestine, from Democratic Republic of Congo to Mexico.

Economic interests and the international arms trade continue to fuel the massive slaughter of civilians in many contexts today. In Syria, States and the international community have failed to protect civilians, while some continue to profit from selling arms and weapons without accountability. This has deliberately fuelled the conflict while directly impacting civilians, including women and girls who disproportionately face the devastating consequences of conflict, displacement and violence.

In Palestine, the systematic violence, destruction, blockade and occupation has led to the deaths and displacement of thousands of women and children. Moreover, the recent attacks against civilians in Gaza have reportedly included the use of internationally-banned weapons. For decades, the League has stood in solidarity with the women of Palestine. To ensure a path to peace in the region, the United Nations and the international community must protect the unalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Discrimination and violence against women are increased by traditional customs and further exacerbated by conflict. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, women continue to face the impacts of conflict and post-

conflict situations, including widespread sexual violence, disease, and displacement, and women human rights defenders often face threats for their political activity.

Impunity, economic inequality, and corruption continue to impact women's rights and communities. In Colombia, for instance, the conflict among the government, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and other armed groups resulted in the widespread use of sexual violence — particularly rape — against women as a tool of war and in the murders or displacement of millions of civilians. In Mexico, high levels of instability and violence continue in the context of the so-called war against organized crime, a strategy that has been based on the use of force and militarization.

Armed conflict not only negatively impacts physical, social and human capital, but also leads to mass destruction of the natural environment, thus diminishing available resources and opportunities for sustainable development. The conflicts in Afghanistan, Lebanon, Somalia, and other countries were inextricably linked with mass deforestation, land degradation, resource scarcity, and water and air pollution; all of which increased the vulnerability of communities, who continue to suffer from the long-term impacts.

Demilitarization is not just a cause for countries perceived to be in conflict. In Australia, women activists have worked with the government to show that this is also relevant in non-conflict settings, given that all States are involved in a global trade in arms and in the erroneous conflation of military action with humanitarian ends.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom makes the following recommendations to the Commission on the Status of Women and the international community:

- Reduce military spending and promote full implementation of Critical Area E of the Beijing Platform for Action, which links gender equality and the call for the control of excessive arms expenditure, and of Article 26 of the United Nations Charter, which calls for the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources.
- Prioritize the prevention of conflict and invest in peace by developing programmes for economic, environmental, political and social justice. This can be achieved through prioritization, support, and funding of non-governmental organizations and their efforts, including prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, guaranteed access to justice, and strengthening a culture of peace.
- Ensure and support women's full and equal participation in all peace negotiations and processes. It is imperative to increase the number of representative women with all parts of security reform processes and disarmament initiatives, as dictated by Resolution 1325. The League urges States to refuse to support any peace negotiations that do not have women as legitimate participants at the table.
- Protect women's human rights and promote the full implementation of all obligations. We demand gender equality and the empowerment of women, particularly through the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The League also calls for the full

implementation of all Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security.

- Commit to women's equal say, equal access and equal share in access to finance and other Means of Implementation during the negotiations on the sustainable development financing package, from the Financing for Sustainable Development to the Post-2015 Summit. The League also calls on governments to ensure a concrete and relevant set of Means of Implementation targets for the full realization of Goal 5 on gender equality, and to commit to "financing women's rights organisations".
- Stop selling arms that inherently violate human rights at home and abroad, and effectively strengthen and implement the Arms Trade Treaty, including Article 7(4), which requires that the risk assessment and implementation of the treaty take into account the impact of the arms trade on the perpetuation of gender-based violence.
- Make disarmament a reality and strengthen and implement disarmament agreements including: the Firearms Protocol, the Programme of Action on small arms, and the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials. This should include efforts to enhance gender, peace and security (Resolutions 1325 and 1820), by ensuring that action plan monitoring and evaluation efforts incorporate gender-equity in decision-making bodies, draw on gender-experts, provide for women to be involved in the process, and compile sex-disaggregated data on provisions, management, use and impacts of small arms.
- Integrate Human Rights, Women Peace and Security, and Disarmament frameworks and mechanisms so that prevention can work more effectively. Strengthen efforts to prevent violence against women and improve gender and women's rights in all mandates.

A century after the League's founding women first came together in The Hague to protest World War I and the exclusion of women's voices, the women peace movement and the League is calling for progressive security analysis and aiming to establish new and radical approaches on how to stop and prevent wars and establish principles of permanent peace.

Though women are oppressed, we are not powerless. Though women are silenced, we are not voiceless. We are mobilized to prevent war and reinvigorate the movement and potential for peace.