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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”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

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.



Statement

Violence against women is a manifestation of the workings of power. The two are intrinsically linked and are experienced through both direct physical coercion and the material basis of relationships that govern the distribution and use of resources, privileges and authority within the home and society. Such dynamics shape the institutional and ideological formations of society and hence dictate gender norms, relations and identity.

Militarization, and cultures of militarism, exacerbate gender roles, further reducing equality, and enabling the legitimatization and continuation of violence. Militarized societies and structures reinforce patriarchal control and power, all of which are incompatible with equal rights and peace. The toxic mix of militarized domination and exclusion of women's rights has severe consequences on the human security of all.

In observation of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom once again stands together to reaffirm our position for a sustainable peace based on justice, equality and disarmament. For 98 years, members and national sections of the League have rejected militarization, domination and exclusion in all its forms, and exposed the interlinkages among these phenomena. Our objectives challenge the root causes of violence as a means to effectively discuss prevention. Regarding this year's theme, the League addresses the undeniable intersections between international order, militarization and disarmament, and the implications of each for the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.

Military spending is one aspect of cultures of militarism, and remains out of control. In 2011, world military spending was estimated to be over 1.7 trillion dollars. This is the equivalent of over 600 years of the core annual United Nations budget. Globally, just six countries export 74 per cent of the world's weapons: China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. The United States sells 35 per cent of the global total. 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.

After the conclusion of this year's session of the Commission on the Status of Women, a second conference on a possible arms trade treaty will take place. The League has consistently called upon Member States — exporters and importers — to negotiate a strong treaty text that includes legally binding gender provisions. The international arms trade treaty should not become a tool to facilitate the arms trade, but rather a mechanism to aid in the prevention of armed conflict and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and to significantly reduce the culture and economy of militarism.

Drawing attention to the intersections of the above-mentioned themes, cases from the national sections of the League are highlighted below, exemplifying the complexity and range of challenges facing our peace activists.

In the case of Colombia, a highly militarized and patriarchal society, the League's women are calling for disarmament, an end to impunity for violence against women, and the equal participation and inclusion of women's rights in the

ongoing peace negotiations that began in October 2012 between the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia. This is a key moment for women and peace in Colombia, where the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) is needed, as a means to establish a solid foundation for advancing the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women.

The League has heard those demands echoed during its recent consultations with women of the Middle East and North Africa region. For decades, the League has stood in solidarity with the women of Palestine. The structural violence and systematic discrimination experienced by women living under occupation is in itself of great consequence. Palestinian women are denied their human rights; citizens are shot on sight; their people are imprisoned without trial; their homes are demolished and their land confiscated. The Palestinian woman, who stands at the centre of her family and cultural life, will remain unable to offer any quality of life for herself or future generations as long as the current status quo of occupation is viewed as acceptable. Occupation is a direct form of violence against women and must be ended. The United Nations and the international community must implement all agreements, including resolutions protecting the unalienable rights of the Palestinian people, so as to ensure a path to peace in the region.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the suffering of Congolese women living amid the daily realities of conflict highlights the fact that violence towards women is being used as a part of military strategies, as rape is used as a war weapon to terrorize, threaten, silence and humiliate. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom-Democratic Republic of the Congo calls for strategies confronting violence against women that address root causes, including the exploitation of natural resources, the proliferation of weapons and the lack of justice.

In Costa Rica, a country without an army, women have experienced increased displays of police action that resemble military oppression more than police work. Protection of the culture of peace, which Costa Ricans have identified with, is fundamental in the effort to prevent violence against women.

Economic interests and the international arms trade continue to fuel the massive slaughter of civilians in many contexts today. In the Syrian Arab Republic, 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, where women and girls face the devastating consequences of conflict, displacement and violence. Women and girls are suffering a range of violations, including horrendous acts of torture in the name of "honour". Preventing violence against women must address those acts, and arms must not be sold where such heinous acts are being perpetrated with impunity.

In Pakistan, members of the League are actively protesting the heinous attack against Malala Yousafazi, while also demanding that girls have the right to education, and that women and girls have the right to live free from violence. Education, including peace education, is fundamental to the prevention and elimination of violence against women.

The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls requires a multifaceted and integrated approach. The members of the League are united in urging States, the United Nations and all relevant actors to support us by prioritizing the prevention of violence and conflict, while also challenging militarism and its negative impacts.

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

- Protect women's human rights and promote the full implementation of all obligations. We demand the participation of women and gender equality, 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 and peace and security.
- Prioritize the prevention of conflict and invest in peace by developing programmes for economic, environmental, political and social justice. This can be achieved through the prioritization, support and funding of non-governmental organizations and their efforts, including the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, guaranteed access to justice and the strengthening of a culture of peace.
- Reduce military spending and promote full implementation of strategic objective E on women and armed conflict of the Beijing Platform for Action, which links gender equality and the call for the control of excessive arms expenditure, and Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations calling for the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources.
- Stop selling arms that inherently violate human rights at home and abroad and support renewed negotiations for an international arms trade treaty, including mechanisms to ensure criteria preventing the sale of arms where gender-based violence is perpetrated.
- Make disarmament a reality, and strengthen and implement disarmament agreements, including the following: the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects; and the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials. This should include efforts to work on gender, peace and security (Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008)), 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 the provision, management, use and impacts of small arms.
- Integrate human rights, women and peace and security, and disarmament frameworks and mechanisms so that prevention can work more effectively. Strengthen work to prevent violence against women and work on gender and women's rights, in all mandates.

- Ensure and support women's full and equal participation in all peace negotiations and processes. It is imperative to increase the representation of women in all parts of security reform processes and disarmament initiatives, as dictated by Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). The League urges States to refuse to support any peace negotiations that do not have women as legitimate participants around the table.
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