Joint statement by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and the Women’s Active Museum on War and Peace (WAM) on “Comfort Women”

WILPF and WAM warmly welcome the comprehensive examination by the Human Rights Council of the human rights situation in Japan, and we also welcome that the Japanese State has been re-elected as a member of the Council, to implement its obligations under the human rights instruments and to “address grave violations of human rights” as indicated in its voluntary pledges and commitments.

In this regard, we expect the Japanese State to demonstrate its commitments by addressing the violations of women’s human rights for which it is responsible, namely Japan’s military sexual slavery during World War II, as recommended in paragraphs 147.145, 147.146, 147.147, 147.148 and 147.158 of the report of the Working Group.1

More than two decades have passed since the first victim broke the silence, and a number of recommendations have already been made by the international human rights bodies, including CEDAW, ICCPR, ICESCR and CAT. However to date, the Japanese State has not acted on any of these recommendations, while a number of survivors have passed away without obtaining justice. Further, recent refusals from the government of Japan and other public figures to accept historical facts and its responsibility constitute another on-going violation of human rights to the survivors.

We remind the Human Rights Council that war and conflict often lead to sexual exploitation and trafficking of women. The reasoning that only the availability of sex slaves will protect the civilian population from sexual abuse and rape institutionalizes crimes which, of their nature, are violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

We therefore deeply regret the Japanese government’s refusal to accept the Council’s recommendations.

Quoting the judgement of the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery, ‘The Crimes committed against these survivors remain one of the greatest unacknowledged and unremedied injustices of the Second World War. There is no education of future generations, and there have been no judgement days for the victims of Japan's military sexual slavery and the rampant sexual violence and brutality that characterized its aggressive war.’

Contact WILPF at: munoz@wilpf.ch, rights@wilpf.ch

1 During the review of Japan on October 31, 2012, several countries [the Republic of Korea, China, the Netherlands, Costa Rica, East Timor the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and Belarus] called on Japan to respond sincerely to the recommendations of the UN human rights mechanisms, and five related-recommendations are included in the conclusion.