Women are mobilising to prevent violence. We are mobilising to fight injustice, discrimination and patriarchy. We are challenging the causes of militarism and the impact on our lives. They are protesting and calling for governments to move the money from war to peace.

Twenty-five years ago, the Beijing Declaration affirmed that women’s full involvement in all efforts for the prevention and resolution of conflicts is essential for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

Madam President, the struggle for women’s rights is linked with the struggle for peace.

The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom regrets, therefore, that peace is not a separate Action Coalition for the upcoming Generation Equality Forums.

We want to see that the Women Peace and Security agenda is integrated in all aspects of the Forums and Action Coalitions. Because issues of peace and security are cross-cutting, they are impacted and impact everything from climate change, economic justice, gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and access to technology.

Furthermore, the leaders here and the leaders of the Action Coalitions have a responsibility to ensure the inclusion of feminist peace and security. The leaders of the Coalition must be able to stand in front of the women’s movement and say that they themselves uphold the commitments of the UN Charter and Beijing Platform for Action. Specifically, we recall Article 26 of Charter and Critical Area E of Beijing Platform which demand disarmament and reduced military expenditures as a precondition for increased security, development, and peace.

Today, we also caution against wilful blindness to structural inequalities. The push for a more neoliberal narrative around “women’s economic empowerment” cannot be void of the analysis of the systems of power, exploitation and injustice.

In a world where 1% has double the wealth of as much as 6.9 billion people, feminists do not push for women to be equally represented among the 1%! Economic justice, feminist justice is not about adding women to failed systems; it is about transforming those systems so that we can build societies of justice, equality and dignity.

Transformative change requires us to reject and resist existing economic relations and practices; to imagine new ways of redistribution of wealth and new thinking about growth, human rights and sustainability. Neoliberal policies failures are compounded in conflict and post-conflict contexts when cooperation and inclusion are essential. In conflict affected situations, the warlords should no longer be profiteering as the shareholders of war.

1 The equal access and full participation of women in power structures and their full involvement in all efforts for the prevention and resolution of conflicts are essential for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.


3 “In order to promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources, the Security Council shall be responsible for formulating, with the assistance of the Military Staff Committee referred to in Article 47, plans to be submitted to the Members of the United Nations for the establishment of a system for the regulation of armaments.”
We acknowledge there has been progress for women’s human rights in many contexts. For example, the Beijing Declaration and CEDAW contributed to the inclusion of legally binding provision preventing gender-based violence in the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). But much more remains to be done.

If you, governments represented in this room, follow through on your obligations under CEDAW and the ATT and your commitments to the Beijing Platform and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, there would be significant more positive change in nearly all facets of women’s lives, including economically, socially, and environmentally. For example, each State can take concrete budgetary action to reduce tremendous resources wasted on weapons and securitisation.

WILPF renews our call on all States and the UN to take bold actions to counter chauvinistic nationalism and use your political will, human rights norms, and the Human Rights Council to address and transform inequalities.

We ask you to increase this Council’s action, through resolutions, the Universal Periodic Review, Commissions of Inquiry and other tools, to hold arms exporters accountable for the impact of the weapons they are selling, to incorporate gendered conflict analysis, and to promote the design of post-conflict transition and justice programmes that ensure fulfilment of legal obligations relating to reparations, restitution, guarantees of non-repetition, reconstruction and justice. We urge you as individuals and institutions to listen more to women, and women’s organisations; to remove obstacles to participation so to enable women to speak for themselves, rather than be spoken for; and to recognise women’s agency and expertise and the vital roles played by women in their community and countries.  

The shared vision of Beijing Platform of Action is bold. It demands a redesigned political economy of peace--from the household to the community to the multilateral system. It imagines creative work of solidarity across hemispheres, national borders, cultural groups, localities, classes and genders. If we are serious about Generation Equality- this requires all of us to challenge the destructive hierarchies of power and exclusion and build solidarity among individuals and communities.

4 See, for example, WILPF’s submission to the High Commissioner’s call for inputs on “Civil society space in multilateral institutions”, available at: https://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Final_WILPF_submission_OHCHR_CSO-31-Oct-2017.pdf