

WILPF Text Suggestions to the UN Declaration on the Human Right to Peace

Peace cannot be understood as the mere state of absence of violence, peace is a composite and to reach sustainable peace all elements of it need to be carefully assembled.

Violence and conflict have their origins in power relations. Thus, peace can only be achieved through a re-conceptualisation of power; understanding better how the elements that create power are interlaced, are interactive and interdependent and how it is highly gendered.

Social justice, disarmament, gender equality or racial discrimination are some of the many essential elements missing. We will here identify the most urgent ones for an eventual Declaration on the Human Right to Peace.

Human Rights

WILPF proposes to recognize boldly in OP1 the Right to Peace as a Human Right. We suggest for example the following wording:

“Everyone is entitled to enjoy the human right to peace that is closely related to the human rights to security and development”.

Disarmament

The Human Rights Council (HRC) is not the right forum to discuss how we reach disarmament, at what pace and the technical details of that path. However, we mustn't forget that 1. the ultimate goal of disarmament is to ensure the well-being of humankind by preventing the human rights violations caused by armed conflict and 2. peace cannot be achieved without disarmament.

For these reasons, whilst the HRC might not be the right forum to discuss the *how* we get there, it is indeed the forum to discuss the ways in which human rights, disarmament and peace relate to each other in a causal way. It is the forum in which we must recognize and remind the reasons why we are aiming at disarmament which is indeed not an end in itself.

Continued dialogue between the fora on disarmament and the HRC, subsidiary bodies, treaty bodies and all other human rights bodies is essential to council and inform the disarmament forato move towards disarmament in a way that contributes to the ultimate goal of protecting human rights in the most efficient way possible and is essential for the legitimacy of the race towards disarmament.

For instance, human rights law has not only informed the draft of the Arms Trade Treaty, it will also be essential for its effective implementation, and the work of human rights bodies, including the Council, are essential in this process.

In light of this, we insist on including disarmament as a principle in OP2. We suggest for example the following wording:

“States should respect and implement equality and non-discrimination, justice and the rule of law, promote disarmament and guarantee freedom from fear and want as a means to build peace within and between societies”.

Implementation

References to implementation measures in regards to the human right to peace are crucial. States are the main duty-holders for these rights, and excluding it would leave their responsibility in a vacuum, and the declaration with virtually no effective content. In this sense WILPF proposes to keep the following reference made on a previous draft:

“States should undertake measures to bring about, maintain and enhance conditions of peace, particularly to benefit people in need in situations of humanitarian crises”.

Gender equality

Patriarchal societies and patriarchal distributions of power contribute to the escalation of conflict and may lead to war.

At the risk of generalizing, where there is a greater divide in how gender roles are created and assigned and they are accompanied by emphasis on the stereotype of male /female difference, then there is a greater risk that societies will use violence as a means of conflict resolution.

There is considerable research including by Cynthia Enloe and Cathy Cohento name but two which underlines this, obvious though it would seem to those who have ever experienced conflict.

The link between gender equality (the right to non discrimination) and peace lies within PP5, PP7, PP10 and PP17 and should be understood in accordance with UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013); the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and CEDAW Committee General Recommendation 30.

Gender equality goes beyond the principle of non-discrimination, it implies positive efforts towards the elimination of stereotypes and social barriers. Promotion of equality and non-discrimination are mentioned in OP2, these two principles are essential to peace and are a vital part of this draft declaration.

Women’s participation

A crucial element for sustainable peace is an inclusive peace building process. The participation of women in this process, whilst it is linked to gender equality, has

deserved specific attention from the UN and its member States because of its importance for the international peace and security. This is pointed out under PP17.

Conclusion

If we are to prevent armed conflict to ultimately protect all human rights, the emphasis must be very much on prevention and gender must be used as a diagnostic. This would be fed through the various treaty body mechanisms and the Universal Periodic Review of the HRC.

We must monitor arms supplies and access in countries where there are indications of a possible rupture. We must look at the foreign policy priorities of states, their trading and financial policies and analyse these as part of their human rights obligations in their dealings with other states in the multi lateral system.

By including these elements within the Declaration on the Right to Peace, we will enable all this necessary steps towards prevention.

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