

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Human Rights, with an Emphasis on the Right to Development

Sustainable Development and Disarmament

Goal 16 of the SDGs on peace, justice and strong institutions acknowledges that sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security and that peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development. Illicit arms flows are identified in goal 16.4 as factors of violence, which must be reduced by 2030.

To ensure the realisation of Goal 16 of the SDGs and the fulfillment of the right to development, WILPF considers that the issue of disarmament must be addressed in a holistic manner, not restricted to the question of illicit arms flows. Indeed, as stated in the Preamble of Declaration on the Right to Development 41/128: *“(...) there is a close relationship between disarmament and development and (...) progress in the field of disarmament would considerably promote progress in the field of development and (...) resources released through disarmament measures should be devoted to the economic and social development and well-being of all peoples and, in particular, those of the developing countries”[1]*. It was also acknowledged in a UN Secretary General Report of 2004 that: *“Excessive armament and military spending can have negative impact on development and divert financial, technological and human resources from development objectives.”[2]*

The failure to develop a sufficient plan to regulate armaments has long undermined the goals of the United Nations including that of sustainable development. Governments that spend excessive financial, technological, and human resources on their militaries divert resources from economic, social, and environmental programs. Disarmament and development do not automatically trigger each other: disarmament must be accompanied by transformative efforts to build or rebuild economic, social, and governing structures that foster political participation and social integration and equality. However, reducing military expenditures does release funds to be used in other ways, and reducing armaments lowers levels of instability and violence, which creates conditions more conducive to sustainable development and peaceful societies.

We thus call on Member States in order to fully realise Goal 16 of the SDGs and the right to development to uphold their commitment under Article 7 of the Declaration on the Right to Development, to do their utmost to achieve general and complete disarmament and to allocate resources released by effective disarmament measures for comprehensive development.

Human Rights and Disarmament – the Next Focus for High-Level Panel on Human Rights Mainstreaming

In order to support the realisation of Goal 16 and of the right to development, we consider that significant efforts should be made to mainstream human rights in the multilateral disarmament bodies and to further connect the work of the human rights council with that of the disarmament fora.

The Human Rights Council produces, through the reports from OHCHR or from Special Procedures, very valuable information on human rights situations and on the impact of weapons on human rights.

As an example, reports carried out in the framework of the Council could feed into the States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty. The Council can provide information on best practices on arms policies and legislation to prevent human rights violations, and this could be useful for States to perform assessments previous to approving arms transfers as stated in articles 6 and 7 of the Arms Trade Treaty.

In this regard, the upcoming study of the OHCHR on report on the different ways in which civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms have been effectively regulated, with a view to assessing the contribution of such regulation to the protection of human rights to be presented in June 2016 will be particularly important as it will provide indicators of good practices in firearms regulations to be taken into account before transferring these weapons. The same can be said about country-specific reports from special procedures or from the High Commissioner that may inform assessments prior to arms transfer to those countries.

On the other hand, the impacts of arms flows and disarmament on human rights, including on the right to life, the right to development, but also on women's human rights and in particular the impacts of weapons on gender-based violence, should be more systematically analysed and mainstreamed into the work of the human rights bodies.

The potential for mutual collaboration between the Human Rights Council and the disarmament fora is still to be evaluated. WILPF would like to suggest that next panel on HR mainstreaming addresses how global disarmament would contribute to the protection of human rights.

[1] Declaration on the Right to Development 41/128, Preamble, paragraph 11

[2] Department for Disarmament Affairs Report of the Secretary-General, The relationship between disarmament and development in the current international context, New York 2004, paragraph 18