



**Submission to the High Commissioner's call for inputs on 'Civil society space in multilateral institutions'**

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**1. Introduction**

The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) has positively noted the Human Rights Council’s commitment to address the shrinking space for civil society in previous resolutions on civil society space.<sup>1</sup> We welcome the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) report “Practical recommendations for the creation and maintenance of a safe and enabling environment for civil society, based on good practices and lessons learned”,<sup>2</sup> and, in particular, the recommendation therein to include a gender perspective and conduct gender impact-assessments in all proposed legislative and policy reforms.<sup>3</sup> WILPF supports the five key elements set out by the High Commissioner as necessary to create and maintain a safe and enabling environment.<sup>4</sup>

In preparing this submission, WILPF drew from the findings of a three-day Convening it organised in April 2017 in good part as a reaction to the increasing obstacles for women’s meaningful participation in the UN system. More than 150 women's rights and peace activists from 40 countries

<sup>1</sup> The most recent resolution being UN Index A/HRC/RES/32/31 of 20 July 2016 on civil society space, and A/HRC/RES/27/31 of 26 September 2014 on civil society space, and A/HRC/RES/24/21 of 27 September 2013 on civil society space: creating and maintaining, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling environment

<sup>2</sup> UN Index A/HRC/32/20 of 11 April 2016

<sup>3</sup> UN Index A/HRC/32/20 of 11 April 2016, paragraph 87 d)

<sup>4</sup> UN Index A/HRC/32/20 of 11 April 2016

gathered to discuss how to make the UN more inclusive and help it live up to the founding principles of its Charter. Two booklets providing an overview of the main findings and recommendations from that gathering are available as annexes to this submission.<sup>5</sup>

Women civil society's meaningful participation in multilateral institutions (hereafter referred to as "meaningful participation" in the context of this submission only) is firmly rooted in international law and numerous international instruments; yet it remains an overlooked component for sustainable peace and addressing root causes of conflict and violence.

For WILPF "meaningful participation" is about ensuring that women civil society organisation can engage based on their experience and expertise. It requires removing on-going obstacles to participation to enable women to speak for themselves, rather than be spoken for. It is not just about counting women—rather, it is about making women count. It requires promoting a women's human rights agenda in all multilateral fora.

### **Expanding the understanding of a "safe and enabling environment"**

This WILPF submission focuses on the invaluable contribution and the participation of women civil society in the work of multilateral organisations, including UN bodies, agencies, funds and programmes, in efforts to advance peace and security. It calls on the UN to adopt a more comprehensive notion of indispensable pre-conditions necessary for an enabling environment, specifically for women civil society actors, to meaningfully participate in multilateral institutions. The factors that we address, such as arms proliferation, militarisation of society and austerity measures, create obstacles to women civil society actors' meaningful participation in decision-making and in multilateral processes and institutions. For this reason, these are factors that need to be included in a more comprehensive definition of a 'safe and enabling environment'.

The submission addresses restrictions faced at specifically the national level or the international level, and restrictions arising at both the national and international level. A major restriction at all levels is the lack of recognition of women's expertise. Restrictions at the national level addressed in this submission are: the lack of recognition of women's expertise; the distinct and threats faced by women human rights defenders, including in the context of corporate abuse; the lack of sustained and flexible core funding to women civil society actors; militarisation; the impact of austerity measures on women; and the stigmatisation of peace activists. At the international level, we have identified restrictions for women civil society actors to be physically present in multilateral fora, and restrictions to access information.

It is imperative and an obligation for multilateral fora to include civil society in all decision-making processes.<sup>6</sup> Various, UN bodies, including human rights bodies, and instruments have emphasised the

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<sup>5</sup> Booklet No. 2: "How UN Agencies and Programmes can ensure Women's meaningful Participation in their work" (2017). Booklet No. 3: "What Member States can do to ensure Women's meaningful Participation in the UN System" (2017).

<sup>6</sup> This is highlighted by the Human Rights Council and OHCHR and the cited human rights framework UN Index A/HRC/32/20 of 11 April 2016: see paragraph 12: such as the right to freedom of opinion and expression and to peaceful assembly and association and the right to participate in public affairs, together with the principle of non-discrimination. These rights are guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (arts. 19, 21, 22 and 25); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (arts. 8 and 15); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (art. 3); the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (art. 5); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (arts. 13 and 15); the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (arts. 21, 29 and 30); the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (art. 24); and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (art. 26)."See also paragraph 14, *ibid*: The European Court of Human Rights has consistently supported civil

need to include women civil society actors at all levels and stages of decision-making fora.<sup>7</sup> It is high time that effective measures be taken to give effect to those recommendations.

## 2. General barriers to women civil society actors' participation in multilateral institutions and processes

### Recognise women as experts of their own national contexts

When women from grassroots organisations participate in multilateral fora, they are often not meaningfully included as knowledge providers or experts.<sup>8</sup> Their inclusion in peace and mediation processes and post-conflict reconstruction efforts is often tokenistic.

Women's participation is at times met with stereotypical expectations, not only by actors at the national level but also from the international community, such as UN staff in UN agencies and UN country teams. Whilst WILPF and partners have been able to count on many UN staff and diplomats that are genuine proponents of women's meaningful inclusion, some diplomats in Yemen for

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society's role in bringing matters of public interest to open debate (Steel and Morris v. United Kingdom, application No. 68416/01, judgment of 15 February 2005).

Moreover, Rio Principle 10 commits states to supporting inclusive public participation, access to justice, and public information concerning the environment. See UN Index A/CONF.151/26, Principle 10. Agenda 2030 calls for "partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society" to implement and monitor the Sustainable Development Goals. And the Women, Peace and Security Agenda affirms the importance of women's participation in peace processes (UNSCR 1325), recognises civil society contributions (UNSCR 2106 (OP 11) and calls for action to consult with civil society (UNSCR 1889 (OP 10); UNSCR 2122 (OP 7(a)) and engage with civil society in creating solutions (UNSCR 1880 (OP 10)

<sup>7</sup> These include:

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions (UNSCR 1820 of 2008, UNSCR 1888 of 2009; UNSCR 1889 of 2010; UNSCR 1960 of 2011; UNSCR 2106 of 2013; UNSCR 2122 of 2011); UNSCR 2242 of 2015 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations.

CEDAW General Recommendations 8, 23,30 (UN Index A/52/38 on political and public life; UN Index CEDAW/C/GC/30)

The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing; and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its emphasis on gender equality, specifically with respect to SDG 5.5: "Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life". See also paragraphs 20 and 35.

The Women Peace and Security Global study reiterates women's fundamental role to secure peace and sets out key recommendations to ensure women's meaningful participation in multilateral fora and beyond. (UN Women (2015), Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace. A Global Study on the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, available at: [http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20\(1\).pdf](http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf))

The 2017 factual summary of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT ) and the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons emphasised the importance of the equal participation of women and men in nuclear disarmament, with the NPT summary encouraging states parties to actively support participation of female delegates in their own NPT delegations and through support for sponsorship programmes.

See also Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on the valuable contribution of women to practical disarmament and the need to include women in all related decision-making processes: resolutions A/RES/65/69 on Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control; A/RES/67/48 on Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control; A/RES/68/33 on Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control; and A/RES/69/61 on Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

<sup>8</sup> See page 17 of annexed Booklet No. 2 and page 14 of annexed Booklet No. 3; see also pages 24, 45, 52 and 308 of UN Women (2015), Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace. A Global Study on the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, available at: [http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20\(1\).pdf](http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf)

instance, according to WILPF partners, did not consider women's participation in the peace process as a priority, claiming that women "were not competent enough".

In the context of peacebuilding efforts in Syria, women organisations report that: "Collectively, dominant stakeholders see nothing wrong in the continued and complete exclusion of women from decision-making fora".<sup>9</sup> Another example is the case of Libya, where WILPF partners have also reported that limited efforts have been made to include women in community peacebuilding efforts. Despite the fact that a cadre of committed and capable Libyan women stands ready to offer alternative solutions to endless war, they are not included in decision-making on the country's future. Furthermore, WILPF partners have reported that the first two Special Representatives of the Secretary General for Libya did little to ensure their participation in peacebuilding activities.<sup>10</sup> In a recent open letter to Ghassan Salamé, the new Special Representative for Libya, a group of women civil society organisations have stressed the need for his Office to work in partnership with local women peace activists, including by strengthening efforts for women's meaningful engagement in the Libyan peace process.<sup>11</sup> It is yet to be seen whether that call will be heeded.

### Recognise women as experts, also in areas that go beyond those conventionally understood as "women's issues"

Women's expertise is often 'boxed into' – and the request for their input is restricted to - issues conventionally perceived as 'women's issues', such as gender-based and sexual violence. If they seek to participate in other fora, such as in the disarmament or security realms, women have to constantly prove that they are "qualified" to address these topics. Gender norms and expectations also impact what ideas or concepts are treated as credible when it comes to issues of militarism, security, weapons, or warfare. Generally speaking, women's contributions focusing on disarmament and dialogue are coded as weak, irrational, or naive.

Many disarmament and arms control NGOs or teams in larger NGOs are women-led or, in some cases, are all women. For instance, in addition to our Reaching Critical Will team within WILPF, the Control Arms Coalition, Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, and International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) are all headed by a woman. This demonstrates vividly that there is interest and expertise available that is not being recognised or utilised by governments. The imbalance of women's representation between government representatives<sup>12</sup> and civil society representatives in disarmament fora and beyond can impact on women civil society actors' leverage to participate and effectively contribute in multilateral fora.

Stereotypes are more likely to be perpetuated if state officials and UN staff do not actively work against these tendencies. Increasing women's representation in domains that have been historically seen as male is a vital step to transform gender stereotypes and ensure women's meaningful participation in *all* areas.

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<sup>9</sup> See page 25, WILPF et al. (2017), Syria Response Consultations on the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, available at: <http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/LIBYA-YEMEN-WEB.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> See WILPF statement to the 34th session of the Human Rights Council [http://wilpf.org/wilpf\\_statements/stop-financing-military-operations-in-libya/](http://wilpf.org/wilpf_statements/stop-financing-military-operations-in-libya/)

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, "Open Letter to Ghassan Salama, United Nations Special Envoy on Libya" by a Group of Women Civil Society Organisations in Libya, 19 September 2017: [http://wilpf.org/wilpf\\_statements/open-letter-from-a-group-of-women-civil-society-organisations-in-libya/](http://wilpf.org/wilpf_statements/open-letter-from-a-group-of-women-civil-society-organisations-in-libya/)

<sup>12</sup> To illustrate: Women's participation in disarmament fora been constantly and reportedly low. To illustrate: of 693 diplomats registered for the UNGA First Committee meeting in 2015, around 70% were men and 30% were women. Similarly, at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in 2015, 901 of the 1,226 registered diplomats were men (73.5%) and 325 women (26.5%). See page 19, ILPI and UNIDIR (2016), Gender, Development and Nuclear Weapons – Shared goals, shared concerns. Available at: <http://www.unidir.org/files/publications/pdfs/gender-development-and-nuclear-weapons-en-659.pdf>

### **Women are not a homogenous group and women's diverse voices must be heard**

Another stereotype hindering women's meaningful participation is the idea that women constitute a homogenous group. The assumption that there is a monolithic women's rights position justifies having few women civil society actors in decision-making fora.

#### **Recommendations**

##### **All stakeholders should:**

- recognise women's agency and expertise beyond normative 'women's issues', and the vital roles played by women in-country. This is a critical first step for multilateral institutions to take concrete actions to ensure women play the fulsome role that is needed;
- actively promote and protect women's meaningful participation in all decision-making processes, national and international, and ensure women's full and effective inclusion in multilateral fora everywhere and at all levels;
- appoint more women and gender experts as UN chief mediators, integrate senior and empowered gender experts in all UN country missions; and ensure gender positions and work is effectively funded;
- challenge gendered coding of concepts and approaches to security and disarmament issues;
- increase the number of women participants in UN fora, such as disarmament or arms control conferences, as well as in expert panels at related side events in UN.

### **3. Restrictions arising at the national level**

#### **Give due attention to the specific risks faced by Women Human Rights Defenders**

In addition to risks and violations faced by all human rights defenders, women human rights defenders experience these violations in gender-specific ways, and they are exposed to or targeted for additional gender-based and sexual violence and gender-specific risks. The High Commissioner has highlighted that "women civil society actors face disproportionately adverse reactions, based on discriminatory stereotypes, by both State and non-State actors attempting to delegitimize their work and isolate them from their communities."<sup>13</sup>

Criminalisation of human rights defenders' work affects women differently who are primary caretakers in their families, or have lesser access to financial resources for legal aid. Stigmatization and smearing campaigns against women human rights defenders will exploit degrading and misogynist stereotypes of women's sexuality or question her role as a mother to delegitimize her in the community. Women human rights defenders are subject to additional violence because by acting in the public sphere, they challenge gender norms and stereotypes. The gendered nature of crimes against women human rights defenders further deepens gender inequality and the exclusion of women from public life and naturally also from multilateral fora.

Arms proliferation impacts on women human rights defenders' ability to carry out their work. For example, while arms themselves may not always be directly implicated in gender-based violence, they are correlated with an increase in gendered inequality and a generalised culture of violence, against women in particular. (The impact of arms proliferation is developed further in the text).

Attacks against women human rights defenders can be perpetrated by corporate, state and non-state actors, including public and private security forces. Violence against women human rights defenders is often invisible and treated with impunity. Because human rights defenders often challenge powerful economic and political interests, they face grave violations, from defamation to criminalization, torture and killings. Women human rights defenders acting to address business-related human rights violations often face heightened risks of death, intimidation, harassment,

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<sup>13</sup> UN Index A/HRC/32/20 of 11 April 2016, paragraph 9

exclusion, defamation and stigmatization in addition to threats and acts of rape and sexual harassment at the hands of state security and private security forces.

Counter terrorism financing restrictions have also been utilised by governments as a tool for harassment, prosecution and surveillance of women's organisations. States have used broader definitions of terrorism to criminalise women's rights actors.<sup>14</sup> Alongside physical risks, "the psychological effects of the stress and burnout of operating in such insecure contexts – including that stress and burnout occasioned by counter-terrorist measures and related funding restrictions – are acute."<sup>15</sup>

Human rights defenders face additional risks when UN agencies support organisations that are not independent from the government. Whilst UN funding or otherwise supporting these organisations poses a problem in itself, it can indirectly negatively affect independent civil society actors. For example, it can restrict their participation in joint informal consultations organised by UN country teams prior to treaty bodies' or UPR reviews. Independent civil society actors may not feel safe enough to openly discuss human rights violations in their national contexts, if they are to do so in a space shared with organisations that are not independent from the government or cannot be sure about the UN's relationship with the government.<sup>16</sup>

### **Recommendations**

#### **States should:**

- ensure respect, protection and enabling of the work of human rights defenders and whistle-blowers, with specific and enhanced protection mechanisms for women human rights defenders to make the environment in which they operate a safer, more enabling and supporting one;<sup>17</sup>
- recognize women human rights defenders in all their diversity, and address harmful attitudes, practices, and gender stereotypes that fuel violence against women in general, and against women human rights defenders in particular;
- refrain from initiating, pursuing, encouraging or in any other ways permitting defamation campaigns against human rights defenders, including defamation and stigmatization of women human rights defenders;
- refrain from bringing criminal charges against human rights defenders speaking out about corporate-related human rights abuses and participating in legitimate protests or demonstrations to defend and promote human rights;
- fully, promptly and independently investigate attacks and intimidation of human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, and ensure access to justice and remedies in cases of intimidation, defamation, or attacks;
- adopt prompt, effective and impartial measures to provide remedy to human rights defenders who have suffered an attack or are at risk of attack, and provide compensation to human rights defenders who have been victims of abuses, including gender-specific violence, due to their work;

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<sup>14</sup> See also page 18, WILPF et al. (2017), Syria Response Consultations on the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, available at: [http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/UK-NAP\\_Syria-Consultations\\_WEB\\_EN.pdf](http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/UK-NAP_Syria-Consultations_WEB_EN.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Page 69, Duke Law International Human Rights Clinic and Women Peacemakers Program, *Tightening the Purse Strings: What Countering Terrorism Financing Costs Gender Equality and Security* (2017)

<sup>16</sup> For more information, see page 25 of annexed Booklet No. 2, "How UN agencies and programmes can ensure women's meaningful participation in their work"

<sup>17</sup> Promotion of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms: protecting women human rights defenders, A/RES/68/181, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N13/450/31/PDF/N1345031.pdf>

- support the inclusion of strong and clear language on measures for the protection of rights holders adversely affected by business activities or those challenging corporate abuses, including human rights defenders and whistleblowers, in a legally binding instrument to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises. Such measures should take into account the gender-specific risks entailed by specific groups of human rights defenders, such as women human rights defenders.<sup>18</sup>
- support the efforts by the OHCHR and the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights in addressing reprisals against those who seek to cooperate with the UN.

#### **UN agencies and programmes should:**

- support the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights in his endeavours to develop and implement a more comprehensive system for preventing and addressing intimidation and reprisals throughout the UN system, including by improving and coordinating response by all UN actors;<sup>19</sup>
- ensure that a gender perspective is integrated in UN efforts to address reprisals and promote civil society participation in multilateral processes, whether at the international or country level;
- critically evaluate to which organisations they provide funding, or types of support to the government, and assess how to ensure that independent civil society actors are not put at risk by being involved in UN-sponsored consultations involving organisations that are not independent from the government.

#### **Support women civil society actors' access to flexible, sustained and core-funding**

Over the past five years, donor funding that goes directly to women's rights organisations has more than halved.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, only 15 out of 62 (24%) United Nations entities reporting data in 2015 had systems to track resources for gender equality and women's empowerment.<sup>21</sup>

Restrictions posed to women civil society's activities as a result of lack of funding cannot be overstated. There are various factors that lead to the persistent underfunding of women's organisations.

Firstly, money is often channelled to bigger international organisations or UN agencies, which may then distribute funds and sub-grants to smaller grassroots organisations. One case in point: five UN agencies receive 50% of the available humanitarian funding for Syria whilst local groups deliver 75% of interventions.<sup>22</sup> This system is ineffective and inefficient, creates barriers, and (indirectly) questions civil society organisations' skills and expertise.

<sup>18</sup> For more information, please see "Integrating a gender perspective into the legally binding instrument on transnational corporations and other business enterprises", at [http://wilpf.org/wilpf\\_statements/integrating-a-gender-perspective-into-the-treaty-on-transnational-corporations-and-other-business-enterprises/](http://wilpf.org/wilpf_statements/integrating-a-gender-perspective-into-the-treaty-on-transnational-corporations-and-other-business-enterprises/)

<sup>19</sup> "In expanding and strengthening the UN's response to reprisals across the Organization, the Assistant Secretary-General intends to focus on the following areas: Develop and implement a more comprehensive system for preventing and addressing intimidation and reprisals throughout the UN system, including by improving and coordinating response by all UN actors; Enhance high-level engagement on reprisals, including on how to prevent reprisals from occurring and ensuring action on urgent cases and ensure appropriate action when reprisals occur. A constructive dialogue with all stakeholders will be pursued, in particular with Member States and civil society; Ensure cooperation with all actors involved.

See <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Reprisals/Pages/ReprisalsIndex.aspx>.

<sup>20</sup> Chowdhury, 'If We are Serious About Peace and Development, We Must Take Women Seriously' (SDGsForAll, 2017).

<sup>21</sup> UNSCR1325 Global Study (UN Women, 2015)

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.local2global.info/area-studies/funding-syria>

Secondly, in the humanitarian field, women are predominantly seen as beneficiaries of services and goods provided by international organisations or UN agencies, and are rarely acknowledged as service providers that require financial and technical support to be able to continue their work at the frontlines. Furthermore, because of a lack of core funding, women activists have had to scale down if not abandon entirely political and civic activism and have been forced to focus on service provision to be able to sustain themselves. Short-cycle funding and extensive donor requirements equally inhibit women from pursuing their activism work, as they are required to constantly report to donors or seek additional funds.

Thirdly, counter-terrorist laws have made access to funding even harder. As WILPF has highlighted<sup>23</sup> and as is vividly illustrated in a study by the Duke Law International Human Rights Clinic and Women Peacemakers Program,<sup>24</sup> counter-terrorism financing and laws have directly and indirectly narrowed the operating space for civil society. Often, donors cut funding to civil society actors working in areas where terrorists or violent extremists are active. De-risking by financial institutions in particular country contexts can prevent civil society from accessing funds. De-risking “encompasses the financial risk management practices by which institutions reduce or lower risk exposure and which can [...] curtail a range of financial services to certain sectors or geographic areas. For financial institutions, particularly when there is little civil society expertise, women’s organizations can be perceived as low-profit, high- risk clients and [...] and women’s rights organizations may be driven out of the formal financial sector.”<sup>25</sup>

Due to due diligence and compliance requirements, donors shift towards providing larger and fewer grants to bigger international organizations, considered to be able to mitigate any potential risk. Moreover, small grassroots are often too small to have the financial and human resources to comply with extensive requirements imposed by donors. Furthermore, in some instances, banks refuse to open accounts for women’s organizations, either actually or constructively, when requirements are too onerous for grassroots civil society women actors to meet them.

As a result, almost 57% of respondents from 60 different organizations indicate that they have experienced delays in, or not receiving funds from domestic or foreign donors. Some banks even refuse to release domestic or foreign funds. In fact, 90% of women's organisations representatives interviewed as part of the study believe that counter-terrorism measures had an adverse impact on their work for peace, women's rights and gender equality generally.<sup>26</sup>

Fourthly, austerity measures, as part of structural reform programmes, can have serious impacts on women’s economic rights. We address this issue as a separate point in this submission, yet it is crucial to highlight that austerity measures equally restrict women civil society actors to participate in decision-making processes at all levels.

In light of the above, the requirement for donors to be flexible cannot be over-emphasized.

### **Recommendations**

WILPF reiterates the High Commissioner’s recommendation to provide core flexible funding to civil society organisations with simplified procedures, so as to ensure that funds are available for informal

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<sup>23</sup> See for instance: WILPF et al. (2017), Syria Response Consultations on the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, available at: [http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/UK-NAP\\_Syria-Consultations\\_WEB\\_EN.pdf](http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/UK-NAP_Syria-Consultations_WEB_EN.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Duke Law International Human Rights Clinic and Women Peacemakers Program, *Tightening the Purse Strings: What Countering Terrorism Financing Costs Gender Equality and Security* (2017).

<sup>25</sup> See page 9, *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Page 8, Duke Law International Human Rights Clinic and Women Peacemakers Program, *Tightening the Purse Strings: What Countering Terrorism Financing Costs Gender Equality and Security* (2017).



groups, such as small grassroots women civil society actors.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, WILPF supports the recommendations made in the previously cited study by the Duke Law International Human Rights Clinic and Women Peacemakers Program on the impact of Countering Terrorism Financing on women grassroots organisations ability to do their work. In particular,

**Donors should:**

- “Increase predictable, accessible, and flexible funding for women’s civil society with simplified procedures to ensure the sustainability of women’s rights organizations and organizing at all levels (local, national, regional, and international), but with a particular focus on the local level. This can include providing multi-year and core funding and less earmarked funds, providing funding according to different organizational modalities (e.g., seed funds to newly-established organizations, small grants with minimal compliance requirements to small organizations, and mid-size grants to larger organizations);
- adopt the UN’s 15% gender-funding target of all funding relating to peace and security to address women’s specific needs and advance gender equality with this percentage being the first, not the final target. Direct funding mechanisms (e.g., that avoid heavy reliance on sub-contracting or consortia arrangements as the source of funding for women’s groups) to increase local and national-level funding is critical to ensure bottom-up, grassroots and independent advocacy, including through embassies.”<sup>28</sup>

WILPF further recommends that

**Donors should:**

- specifically, with respect to countering-terrorism financing, engage and include civil society, including grassroots women’s groups, in the design, implementation and assessment of counter terrorism financing measures. Those measures are to be fully compliant with international human rights and humanitarian law, including with the principles of non-discrimination and equality;
- strengthen accountability for results towards women and girls and ensure their democratic ownership by insisting on partnerships with local women’s rights groups, even if they are not officially registered;
- support the creation of a central database of all services offered to women and girls in one specific country or region to avoid repetition, ensure transparency, and identify gaps;
- undertake gender and human rights impact assessment of austerity measures (see next section for more information).

**Assess and mitigate the impact of austerity measures on women civil society actors**

WILPF’s research has shown that conditionalities, imposed by international organisations, contingent on structural reforms and austerity measures, often have devastating impacts on the economic and social rights of women. This further poses obstacles to women civil society actors’ meaningful participation in decision-making processes in countries such as Bosnia or Ukraine.<sup>29</sup> This also,

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<sup>27</sup> UN Index A/HRC/32/20, paragraphs 88 b) and 74

<sup>28</sup> Page 85, Duke Law International Human Rights Clinic and Women Peacemakers Program, *Tightening the Purse Strings: What Countering Terrorism Financing Costs Gender Equality and Security* (2017).

<sup>29</sup> See, for instance, WILPF et al. (2017), *Obstacles to Women’s Meaningful Participation in Peace Efforts in Ukraine. Impact of Austerity Measures and Stigmatisation of Organisations Working for Dialogue*. Joint submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Ukraine, 28<sup>th</sup> Session, available at: [http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/UKRAINE.UPR\\_JointSubmission-30-Mar-2017.pdf](http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/UKRAINE.UPR_JointSubmission-30-Mar-2017.pdf). See also: WILPF et al. (2017), *The Effects of Intervention by International Financial Institutions on Women’s Human Rights in Ukraine*. Joint Shadow Report to the CEDAW Review of Ukraine, 66<sup>th</sup> Session, available at: [http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/CEDAW-Shadow-Report-on-Ukraine\\_20170124.pdf](http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/CEDAW-Shadow-Report-on-Ukraine_20170124.pdf).

See also: WILPF (2017) “A Feminist Perspective on post-conflict Restructuring and Recovery. The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina”. Available at: <http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Feminist-political-economy-ENG-FINAL.pdf>

evidently, can prevent women civil society actors to participate in multilateral institutions, whether at the international or country level.

Particular conditionalities linked to the funding by international bodies such as the EU and the IMF have been shown to contribute to the feminisation of poverty, and the deepening of gender inequalities within the family and society as a whole. This is because firstly, women are among the primary beneficiaries of pro-social spending. For example, cutbacks in public health and social services expenditures rely on shifting the burden of care to women. Gendered social norms mean women are expected to compensate for reduced state support by spending more time to care for sick and elderly family members. This, in turn, also reduces the amount of time available for remunerated work. Secondly, due to the feminization of care in both paid and unpaid work, women tend to be employed in the sectors where most job cuts have taken place.<sup>30</sup>

Violations of women's economic and social rights, such as result of austerity measures, render therefore any language on women civil society actors' meaningful participation meaningless.

### **Recommendations**

**States, international financial institutions and international organisations should:**

- conduct *ex ante* and *ex post* facto human rights and gender impact assessments of any new policy, especially structural adjustment programmes and austerity measures. These impact assessments have to be transparent and have to include community participation and consultation.

### **Challenge and eliminate arms proliferation and militarisation**

Arms transfers can have serious consequences for the rights and safety of women in the countries that receive the weapons. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons, both in wartime and non-conflict situations with significant political tensions and systemic gendered discrimination, may disproportionately affect women.<sup>31</sup> While arms themselves may not always be directly implicated in gender-based violence, they are correlated with an increase in gendered inequality and a generalized culture of violence, against women in particular. Furthermore, the proliferation of arms has a negative impact on women's equality and bargaining power within the household, their mobility, and their political participation. Widespread possession and use of weapons tend to prevent women from fully participating in public and political life, and to hinder their access to and use of resources, business and employment opportunities. Arms' accessibility and availability can facilitate or exacerbate violence against women, not only in situations of armed conflict but also in non-conflict situations, such as in countries that experience high rates of firearm-related deaths, including femicides, as well as high levels of impunity and insecurity.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the use of weapons of

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<sup>30</sup> WILPF et al. (2017), The Effects of Intervention by International Financial Institutions on Women's Human Rights in Ukraine. Joint Shadow Report to the CEDAW Review of Ukraine, 66<sup>th</sup> Session, available at: [http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/CEDAW-Shadow-Report-on-Ukraine\\_20170124.pdf](http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/CEDAW-Shadow-Report-on-Ukraine_20170124.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Chinkin, C. (2016), "Gender and the Arms Trade Treaty: a legal overview", available at: <http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Gender-and-the-Arms-Trade-Treaty-a-legal-overview.pdf>; WILPF (2013), Promoting gender equality in the implementation of the UN Arms Trade Treaty", available at: <http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/ATT-Implementation.pdf> "; WILPF (2015), "Gender-based violence and the ATT, available at: [http://wilpf.org/wilpf\\_publications/gender-based-violence-and-the-arms-trade-treaty/](http://wilpf.org/wilpf_publications/gender-based-violence-and-the-arms-trade-treaty/); WILPF (2016), " Preventing gender-based violence through arms control", available at: <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/news/latest-news/10793-new-publication-preventing-gender-based-violence-through-arms-control>; Butler, D. M. (2012), "Gender and the ATT", Saferworld, available at: <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/news-and-views/comment/29-gender-and-the-att> .

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, WILPF (2015), "Gender-based violence and the ATT", available at: <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/resources/publications-and-research/publications/10112-gender-based-violence-and-the-arms-trade-treaty>

Various human rights bodies have also emphasised the link between arms transfers and the increased risk of gender-based violence: HRC Resolution 24/35 (2013): "Impact of arms transfers on human rights in armed

indiscriminate effect, such as explosive weapons, may have particular implications for women when they are used in populated areas, as women may be uniquely affected by the destruction of infrastructure or the burden of caring for the wounded, particularly in a context of social gender inequality.

More broadly, high levels of militarism in societies and communities can have negative impacts on women's rights and wellbeing. In places where foreign military bases have a significant presence, such as Japan or Djibouti, local populations often face higher risk of sexual violence, including trafficking, forced prostitution, and rape.<sup>33</sup>

In 2015, \$1.67 trillion was spent on arms, while only 2% of peace and security aid was spent on gender equality.<sup>34</sup> The amount spent on arms has increased by approximately 60% from 2000 to 2015, the equivalent of 2500 years of expenditure by international disarmament and non-proliferation organisations.<sup>35</sup> In 2010, the income of the global feminist movement (\$106 million for 740 women's organisations) was less than the cost of a single F-35 Fighter plane (\$137 million).<sup>36</sup>

States' spending has been disproportionately geared towards increased militarisation and the defence sector. The UN also supports this militarised logic. In addition to unilateral military

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conflicts"; HRC Resolution 26/16 (2014): "Human rights and the regulation of civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms"; HRC Resolution 29/10 (2015): "Human rights and the regulation of civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms"; and HRC Resolution 32/12 (2016): "Impact of arms transfers on human rights".

General Recommendation 30, CEDAW/C/GC/30: The CEDAW Committee has restated its concerns that "the proliferation of conventional arms, especially small arms, including diverted arms from the legal trade, can have a direct or indirect effect on women as victims of conflict-related gender-based violence, as victims of domestic violence and also as protestors or actors in resistance movements." (paragraph 32.). The Committee has also affirmed that States parties are required to focus on the prevention of conflict and all forms of violence, including by having "a robust and effective regulation of the arms trade, in addition to appropriate control over the circulation of existing and often illicit conventional arms, including small arms, to prevent their use to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence." (paragraph 29).

General Recommendation 35, CEDAW/C/GC/35 In its most recent General Recommendation 35 the CEDAW Committee has recognized that accessibility and availability of firearms, including their exportation, as evidenced in militarisation, heighten women's risk of exposure to serious forms of gender-based violence; the CEDAW Committee affirmed state obligations to address gender-based violence by state and non-state actors, including around extraterritorial state military action.

Report to the UN Human Rights Council, UN Index: A/HRC/35/23, 6 June 2017: In addressing gender-based acts of violence and killing, the Special Rapporteur has recently recommended that states "develop mechanisms to analyse whether any arms being assessed for approval for transfer, as well as the granting of licenses on production, will facilitate or contribute to gender-based violence or violence against women by the recipient, in accordance with the obligation on risk assessment processes of the Arms Trade Treaty.", paragraph 116

UN Index A/HRC/35/8, 3 May 2017. Report the 35th regular session of the Human Rights Council, requested by the Human Rights Council with resolution 31/12, 1 July 2016. The report stresses that, to be effective, human rights risk assessments need to "be carried out on a case-by- case basis and take full account of the gender dimension of arms transfers", paragraph 49

<sup>33</sup> See for example WILPF (2017), Remote warfare and sexual violence in Djibouti, Available at:

<http://reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Publications/remote-warfare-sexual-violence-djibouti.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.peacewomen.org/WPS-Financing>

<sup>35</sup> Page 143, UN Women (2015), Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace. A Global Study on the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, available at:

[http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20\(1\).pdf](http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf)). Available at:

[http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20\(1\).pdf](http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf)

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/20-years-shamefully-scarce-funding-feminists-and-womens-rights-movements>

operations, there is now an expanding list of military deployments supported by the UN and regional organisations, such as NATO, the European Union, the African Union and the Arab League.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, this excessive military spending acts as a barrier to gender equality, non-violence and implementation of the SDGs, as tremendous resources spent on weapons are not spent on supporting social development and conflict prevention. In fact, money spent on weapons often exacerbates challenges to development and equality.

Against this backdrop, skewed expenditures towards defence and militarisation impacts women's ability to participate meaningfully in two ways: it firstly contributes to increased arms proliferation and increased levels of insecurity; and the immense expenditure on security at the expense of investing in social and economic rights more broadly and in women's organisations specifically, has a direct impact on women civil society actors' ability to participate at the local, national and multilateral level.

SDG 16<sup>38</sup> and the Beijing Platform for Action and Agenda 21 have highlighted the need to reduce excessive military expenditures and redirect resources the economic and social development, particularly of women.<sup>39</sup>

Arms exporters must do more to take responsibility for the impact of the weapons they are selling. Under the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), states parties are obliged to deny arms exports, if merely a *risk* can be identified that arms transfers may commit or facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian law or human rights law. Article 7 (4) of the ATT requires that States shall, prior to authorization of the export of arms under its jurisdiction, in an objective and non-discriminatory manner, take into account the risk of conventional arms being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women. WILPF has raised states parties' obligations under the ATT and other human rights instruments in various submissions to UN treaty bodies.<sup>40</sup> The potential for the ATT to reduce arms transfers that facilitate gender-based violence is there but current state practice indicates that this is not yet being implemented and in fact, export control officials state that they do not know how to make such an assessment. Of course, importing countries have a responsibility as well, and gender-based violence is a problem in all countries irrespective of their role in the global arms trade.

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<sup>37</sup> <http://peacewomen.org/security-council/2015-high-level-review-global-study>

<sup>38</sup> SDG 16.4: "By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime."

<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-16-peace-justice-and-strong-institutions/targets/>

<sup>39</sup> Beijing Area E, Agenda 21, 22.16: "Undertake to explore new ways of generating new public and private financial resources, inter alia, through the appropriate reduction of excessive military expenditures, including global military expenditures, trade in arms and investment for arms production and acquisition, taking into consideration national security requirements, so as to permit the possible allocation of additional funds for social and economic development, in particular for the advancement of women"

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/armed.htm>

<sup>40</sup> See, for instance, WILPF (2017), The Impact of Italy's Arms Transfers on Women – Italy's Extraterritorial Obligations under CEDAW, Shadow Report submitted to the 67th Session of the CEDAW Committee. Available at: [http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/WILPF-CEDAW-ITALY-Report\\_Final\\_June\\_17-2.pdf](http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/WILPF-CEDAW-ITALY-Report_Final_June_17-2.pdf);

WILPF and ECCHR (2017), The Impact of Germany's Arms Transfers on Women – Germany's Extraterritorial Obligations under CEDAW, Joint Shadow Report submitted to the 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the CEDAW Committee.

Available at: [http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/CEDAW-Shadow-Report-on-Germany\\_20170130.pdf](http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/CEDAW-Shadow-Report-on-Germany_20170130.pdf)

WILPF et al. (2017), Women, Peace and Security in Nigeria, Joint Shadow Report submitted to the 67th Session of the CEDAW Committee. available at:

[http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Nigeria\\_CEDAW\\_FINAL\\_June\\_2017.pdf](http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Nigeria_CEDAW_FINAL_June_2017.pdf)

## **Recommendations**

### **Exporting States should:**

- conduct transparent human rights and gender impact assessments, in line with the ATT's requirements, before granting export licenses;
- listen to the experiences of women that have been impacted by weapons to better understand the problem and incorporate this information into arms transfer decisions.
- Provide training for export officials on how to make a gender-based violence risk assessments and seek experts advice on how develop such assessments and training.

### **Importing States should:**

- critically assess disproportionate spending on the defence sector at the detriment of social spending;
- work with exporting countries to prevent the diversion and misuse of arms such as in facilitating gender-based violence at the national, community, and household levels.

### **States with foreign military bases should:**

- dismantle those bases;
- in the meantime, ensure proper training for soldiers and contractors about trafficking and gender-based violence; and provide for prevention and remediation mechanisms in relation to sexual violence or other forms of gender-based violence.

## **Combat the stigmatisation of peace activists**

Civil society actors engaging in dialogue across ethnic, national or other divides provide a valuable counter to violence and also sources of ideas and support for peace processes. As women play a more prominent part in civil society initiatives for dialogue and cooperation than in official peace negotiations, such activities also provide a valuable channel for feeding in the views of women from the community level as well as drawing on their skills and engagement to contribute to resolution of a conflict. However, civil society actors working for peace are often subject to smear campaigns, being labelled as “enemies of the state”, “traitors”, and in the case of Ukrainian peace activists as “pro-Russian” or “pro-separatists”. For example, as WILPF together with Ukrainian NGOs describe in a joint submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Ukraine, “dialogues bringing together representatives of civil society from Ukraine, Russia and the non-government controlled territories are portrayed as inherently dangerous and those engaging in such activities as either unwittingly, or wittingly, becoming agents of “the enemy”.<sup>41</sup>

## **Recommendations**

### **States should:**

- take concrete steps against the stigmatization of civil society actors engaged in dialogue and cooperation activities and promote awareness-raising programs for the public and officials about the importance and legitimacy of such activities and facilitate peace activists' work.

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<sup>41</sup> Page 6, WILPF et al. (2017), Obstacles to Women's Meaningful Participation in Peace Efforts in Ukraine. Impact of Austerity Measures and Stigmatisation of Organisations Working for Dialogue. Joint submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Ukraine, 28<sup>th</sup> Session, available at: [http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/UKRAINE.UPR\\_JointSubmission-30-Mar-2017.pdf](http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/UKRAINE.UPR_JointSubmission-30-Mar-2017.pdf)

#### 4. Restrictions arising at the international level

##### Ensure avenues for women civil society actors to physically be present in multilateral fora

Aforementioned lack of funds poses not only restrictions to women grassroots' work in-country, but also poses serious obstacles to cover travel expenses needed to be physically present in multilateral fora. Even if funds are available, women activists may still be targeted in the airport and prevented from travelling.<sup>42</sup>

Another big obstacle to women's freedom of movement is the widespread denial of visas. This year, the foundation and purpose of the 61<sup>st</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) was compromised and challenged by the travel ban introduced by the US Administration on 27 January 2017, which sought to ban entry to the US for people from Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. In addition to the ban on these countries, women from other countries in the Middle East (not subject to the ban), from countries in Central and South America, and from some countries in Africa, also reported being denied visas. They were thus denied the opportunity to let their voices be heard at CSW61 in New York. In September 2017, the US administration issued its third travel ban, which is more expansive than its predecessors. The ban targets eight countries, with three new countries: North Korea, Chad and Venezuela.<sup>43</sup>

These unilateral actions by the US as the host state has had a major impact on the ability of the UN to uphold the principles enunciated in the UN Charter, in human rights law, and indeed in the CSW. The US Administration's travel ban brought an issue that had long been present into the spotlight: host countries' (visa) policies have significant detrimental effects on women activists' freedom of movement.

Furthermore, WILPF has experienced first-hand how embassies of a country grant and deny visas based upon what appear to be inconsistent policies.

Moreover, last-minute changes to the Programme of Work, such as it was the case during the 36<sup>th</sup> regular Human Rights Council (HRC) session when, at the very last minute, an interactive dialogue was brought forward by one day, impact human rights defenders' participation in the HRC. In the case of HRC36, for example, the last-minute decision to hold the interactive dialogue with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances on the first day of the session rather than the following one prevented a representative of Families for Freedom from addressing the HRC in person. Families for Freedom is a group of Syrian women activists who all have relatives either disappeared or in detention and campaigning to mobilise public opinion around the issue of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances.

In several instances, member states and UN bodies have provided only one month's notice to civil society prior to critical meetings and events at the multilateral level. For instance, in 2015, around the 15th Anniversary and High-Level Review of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, civil society was informed that Spain had changed the date of a debate with just one month's notice. "This was clearly putting the schedule of the Prime Minister of Spain and the Secretary-General over that of civil society voices from around the world who are key to implementation and action."<sup>44</sup> Practices like those have persisted, with the date for the 17th annual open debate on Women, Peace and Security being confirmed only at a very late stage.

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<sup>42</sup> Harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders in form of travel bans are again highlighted in the OHCHR report UN Index A/HRC/36/31 on reprisals against human rights defenders

<sup>43</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/sep/25/trump-administration-travel-ban-president>

<sup>44</sup> [http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/Open%20letter%20October%202015\\_0.pdf](http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/Open%20letter%20October%202015_0.pdf)

There is a lack of consistency in accreditation policies and guidelines, which detrimentally impacts women, and mothers in particular. We are also aware of women who needed to bring their small children to UN human rights bodies' meetings in Geneva and whose children were denied access by UNOG Security; this was despite the fact the children would have been looked after by someone while their mothers were speaking at the UN meeting. In one case, the person who planned to bring her child to a CEDAW Committee's session had notified the relevant secretariat weeks prior to the meeting. Nonetheless, UNOG security refused to allow her child in, and when the mother protested, the security guard threatened to prevent the mother from entering UN premises. This practice prevents mothers of young children, who cannot place their children in day-care, or who need to travel with their children, from accessing UN facilities and participating in UN meetings.

Less than 15 years ago, NGOs were able to observe the negotiations and approach delegations on the floors of the UN conference rooms in New York. In recent years, NGO participation has been subjected to increasing restrictions, limiting our capacity to work with member states. During CSW61 and the 2017 High-Level Political Forum, civil society representatives were kept outside the conference rooms where member state representatives engaged in the formal deliberations on the agendas.<sup>45</sup> During CSW61, UN Security staff attempted to remove civil society (T-Pass Holders) from the building after 6pm. Furthermore, when the General Assembly General Debates are taking place, civil society is only able to enter the UN premises with special event passes that are distributed before specific events. These actions directly and indirectly inhibit women's full, equal and effective participation in multilateral institutions and processes.

Lastly, UN security personnel's militaristic uniforms, predominantly consisting of men, may deter, intimidate or frighten women to engage with the UN. The presence of security personnel in uniform in UN premises can remind women activists of traumatic experiences, coming from conflict or highly volatile and insecure contexts.

## **Recommendations**

### **States should:**

- follow consistent, non-discriminatory, transparent procedures for visa applications;
- ensure that women's participation and engagement in UN mechanisms and forums can be facilitated rapidly and efficiently;
- ensure that visas are granted to women human rights defenders that allow them to participate in UN and other multilateral fora;
- prioritise holding meetings in accessible spaces at the UN that are open to civil society with early indication of these events for planning.

### **UN agencies and programmes should:**

- facilitate access to UN decision-making bodies for civil society through accessible venues, flexible translation, and expanded financial support for UN civil society speakers to allow for time for donor and advocacy meetings;
- provide support to women in their visa applications, for example, through timely letters of invitation;
- allow mothers who need to take their young children with them to UN meetings to do so;
- assess the necessity for UN security to wear military uniforms and in light of the impact this can have on women activists and survivors.

## **Ensure wide access to information**

WILPF reiterates recommendations made by the High Commissioner to expand transparency of public, multilateral meetings through, for instance, webcasting.<sup>46</sup> However, the technical language

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<sup>45</sup> <http://www.peacewomen.org/node/98284>

<sup>46</sup> Paragraph 89 c), UN Index UN A/HRC/32/20

and formalities of UN proceedings can be a deterrent for grassroots organisations. Often, key documents are not translated into languages other than English, French or Spanish. Specifically, new opportunities for funding, changing rules of procedures, such as the recently introduced accreditation system at UNOG, is not widely communicated, and often does not reach grassroots organisations on the ground.

### ***Recommendations***

#### **UN agencies and programmes should:**

- set up webinars and short videos prior to UN meetings that inform about practicalities in an accessible manner, and by doing so,
- “de-mystify” formalities and processes;
- support the in-country dissemination of informative videos, booklets and the like, including in rural and remote areas regarding possibilities to engage with the multilateral system.

#### **States should:**

- ensure that civil society actors have access to tools and information about opportunities and possibilities to engage with the multilateral system;
- support the dissemination of informative videos, booklets and the like, including in rural and remote areas of the country, regarding possibilities to engage with the multilateral system.

## **5. For more information**

Please see:

**YouTube video "[Ensuring Women's Meaningful Participation in the UN System](#)"**

**Links to the Booklet addressed to [UN Agencies and Programmes](#) and [fact sheet](#).**

**Booklet addressed to [Member States](#) and [fact sheet](#).**