

16 March 2022

UN Human Rights Council, 49th regular session (28 February - 1 April 2022)

Item 3: General debate

Statement on the OHCHR report on firearms

WILPF welcomes the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' report on the "Impact of the civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms by children and youth" (A/HRC/49/41).

The analysis in the report shows several of the ways in which firearms negatively impact a wide range of human rights of children and youth. The report is another important reminder of why it is so important that the Human Rights Council continue to address the impacts of arms on human rights both in country and thematic resolutions.

The report offers a nuanced picture of the interconnectedness of firearms violence with a range of other considerations, such as differentiated vulnerability and impacts, and the various drivers of violence, including structural issues. It would have, however, benefitted from a broader root cause analysis.

We welcome that the report recalls that "The impact on women and girls often intersects with other factors, such as indigenous and minority status;"¹ and that it provides additional gender analysis, including that certain forms of firearms use also disproportionately affect other groups in vulnerable situations, such as LGBTQI persons.²

The report also contains important points about certain concepts of masculinity which contribute to gender-based violence and abuse, but it could have gone further in describing how the firearms industry and other industries, such as the toy and gaming industries, exploit and reinforce restrictive and harmful concepts of masculinity to sell their products.

We welcome the recommendation to states to take steps to reduce the number of civilian-held legal and illegal firearms,³ and the reminder that "the availability of firearms in society is a precondition for the acquisition and possession of firearms by children and youth."⁴ Among others, we find particularly valuable the following recommendations to states to :

¹ Paragraph 33.

² Paragraph 34

³ Paragraph 40

⁴ Paragraph 50

- “collect and publish disaggregated data on the acquisition, possession and use of firearms by children and youth, and to invest in understanding the underlying drivers of firearms use impacting the enjoyment of human rights;”⁵
- demonstrate clear and consistent political commitment to alter the social and cultural patterns of conduct of boys and men that contribute to the trend of firearms deaths being, in raw numbers, overwhelmingly caused by and inflicted upon men, a trend that “is tied to a stereotyped and inherently harmful notion of masculinity which also contributes to gender-based violence and abuse;”⁶
- “consider modelling requirements to manufacturers and dealers based on the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), which include the obligation to avoid causing or contributing to adverse human rights impacts, preventing or mitigating human rights abuse, and the obligation to conduct human rights due diligence (principles 11, 13 and 17).”⁷

The reference to the UNGPs is a step in the right direction in reminding states and companies that arms producers and dealers have responsibilities to conduct robust human rights due diligence. Human rights due diligence covers not only the way the arms are used by third parties, but also companies’ responsibilities for marketing strategies targeting children and youth. Human rights responsibilities of companies exist over and above compliance with national laws and regulations. Future OHCHR reports should expand the analysis of the link between the UNGPs and the arms industry.

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Note: In October 2021, WILPF made a [submission](#) to OHCHR for the report on “Impact of the civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms by children and youth” (A/HRC/49/41).

⁵ Paragraph 49

⁶ Paragraph 53

⁷ Paragraph 50