



WILPF STATEMENT
Geneva, Switzerland
8 March 2006

NGO Statement to the Conference on Disarmament on the Occasion of International Women's Day

Ladies and Gentleman, Distinguished Delegates,

We were hoping to be able to read this statement to you in 2006 for the first time in the more than twenty years we have been presenting it to the CD. However, despite all the support we have heard over the past several weeks, apparently it is not yet possible to have a female civil society leader address you from the floor in a statement delivered once a year on the occasion of International Women's Day. Although we are disappointed that we are unable to read our own statement, we see this as a testimony to the power of civil society and women's NGOs in particular. We would especially like to thank the Ambassadors and representatives who so eloquently spoke on our behalf to request the opportunity to address this forum ourselves.

International Women's Day began in 1909 and has been directly linked with the engagement of women in political processes. In the CD, only 13% of member state delegations are led by women. This year, civil society around the world is marking International Women's Day through protesting war, campaigning for Nuclear Disarmament and demanding equal participation in all levels of decision-making. As we have done since 1984, we are bringing the voices of women to the CD.

NGOs have long been called the conscience of the international community, but we also serve practical functions. Every week, we are in the gallery, listening to the public debates and then sharing them with concerned people around the world. We offer numerous resources to you – we act as a liaison to the public, as a source for technical expertise, and as archives and as institutional memory.

Our utility in these areas is widely recognized and we have formed fruitful collaborative relationships with governments over the years. It is time for you to formally recognize our work and explore best practices developed in other international security fora here in the CD. The CD will benefit from greater transparency and engagement with the outside world. We are happy to work with you to facilitate that.

Having watched this forum for decades, allow us to share some observations from the gallery. On the programme of work that has eluded you for the past nine years, we not only hear the



most governmental support for the “5 Ambassadors’ proposal” to establish ad hoc committees on:

- Fissile Material Treaty
- Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS)
- Nuclear Disarmament
- Negative Security Assurances (NSAs)

We have not yet heard a single plenary statement opposing it. We are told the CD is no closer to consensus, but not told why. The world would like to know who opposes the A5 proposal, and why, and what alternative suggestions will be made to achieve consensus on a Programme of Work.

We also have not heard a single state publicly oppose a Fissile Materials Treaty (FMT). If the only impediment to beginning negotiations is the CD’s inability to consense on a Programme of Work, then we expect we will see significant efforts, especially from the major stakeholders, to delve into the issues surrounding an FMT this year. The Presidents of the year have provided you with an excellent opportunity to investigate technical issues and explore convergence in areas of difficulty. Any serious examination will include technical experts from around the world and capitals. We expect to see members of the newly formed fissile materials panel here in May as well as experts from your capitals. We expect to see in-depth debate on verification and on existing stocks. We expect these discussions to act as pre-negotiations, to develop a framework for negotiations. We also expect these discussions to be of enough significance to regenerate confidence in the CD so negotiations begin as soon as possible. The seriousness of this exercise will have a significant influence on the outside world’s opinion of the CD’s ability to work without help from other fora.

NGOs are ready to support and encourage all pre-negotiations and negotiations of an FMT. Our International Women’s Day seminar this year paid attention to an FMT, linking it to making progress on non-proliferation and disarmament. An FMT is verifiable, and verification is absolutely crucial to any effective disarmament and nonproliferation regime. We believe that just as the international community learned how to verify the CTB which was then negotiated, science will prove the verifiability of an FMT. We want you to begin negotiations as soon as possible, and if they begin before you reach consensus on verification, we are confident these issues can and will be worked out during negotiations.

We believe nuclear disarmament can and will be achieved. We recognize there are challenges and setbacks in the process of achieving true international peace and security, but our confidence in this body to overcome those obstacles remains strong.

Thank you.

NGO Working Group on Peace

Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom

International Alliance of Women

CONSULTATIVE STATUS WITH UN ECOSOC, UNCTAD AND UNESCO.
SPECIAL CONSULTATIVE RELATIONS WITH FAO, ILO AND UNICEF.