

**JOINT STATEMENT**  
**Geneva, Switzerland**  
**16 December 2004**

## **Statement on the Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective Violence against Women**

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, World Young Women's Christian Association, Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice Mr. Chairman, I speak on behalf of Women's International League for peace and Freedom, the World Young Women's Christian Association and the Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice. During the High Level Segment the question of violence against women was officially raised by almost every state and in this occasion we would like to address the question of Violence Against Women in armed conflict.

First of all, we would like to welcome the appointment of Justice Louise Arbour as High Commissioner for Human Rights. We hope she will make significant changes in addressing the issue of violence against women in armed conflict after having played a significant role in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the Former Yugoslavia. Being aware of the weaknesses of those tribunals, we assert that sexual violence should not be used as a tool for genocide or ethnic cleansing while perpetrators go unpunished. Article 38 of the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights states that 'violation of human rights of women in situations of armed conflict is a violation of the fundamental principles of International Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law.'

Women are not only victims but also negotiators, peacemakers and advisors. We call upon states to take action to eradicate gender-based violence in armed conflict as well as prevent conflict itself. One of the most important ways to realize this is to support and strengthen women's active participation in peace building processes. We urge all States to enforce and implement the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (adopted in October 2000) within their domestic legislation. We believe that its implementation would recognize women's capabilities, create understanding of their role in the international arena and enable them to contribute their skills and competence in conflict resolution. This could only be achieved by increasing the number of women in decision and policy-making levels to 50% as has already happened in Norway and Finland.

Gender based violence in armed conflict and specifically, rape, as a weapon of war is not a new phenomenon. It has existed and still continues: Algerian women raped by French soldiers, Vietnamese women by Americans, the comfort women from Korea, China and the Philippines who were used as sex slaves by the Japanese military

during the Second World War, the rape of Somali women refugees in Kenyan camps, Kuwaiti women by Iraqi forces, the rape of Bosnian women by Serbian forces, Burundi women raped by rebels and military forces.... just to name few.

In order to stop impunity of sexual violence during armed conflict, we recommend the following:

That states which have not yet ratified the Rome Statutes of the International Criminal Court do so as a matter of priority,

Provide adequate training for personnel investigating sexual violence and gender-based crimes, and ensure the prosecution of these crimes through the International Criminal Court,

Ensure legal representation, protection, safety and privacy of victims and witnesses in addressing and prosecuting gender based crimes,

Make the process of reparations comprehensive and gender inclusive in the awarding of compensation for victims of sexual violence and gender based crimes.

Amend the Fourth Geneva Convention relative the Protection of Civilians to recognize sexual violence, particularly rape, as a grave breach of the laws of armed conflict.

There are economic, political, social and legal consequences of rape and other forms of sexual violence in armed conflict such as the stigmatisation of the victim, forced pregnancy and abortion, loss of property, separation of families and sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS. In addition, armed conflict has greatly increased poverty, the economic marginalisation of large numbers of people and communities as well as the loss of dignity of individuals, especially women. In view of this we recommend that concerned governments create gender sensitive programmes of rehabilitation, reconstruction and reintegration as well as ensure access to health care and education for women.

Last but not the least we would like to note with concern the discriminatory treatment given to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda which was carried on in the process and coverage of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Tribunal for Rwanda. The genocide in Rwanda has cost the lives of almost a million people and the rape of more than 250, 000 women. Despite the horrors and atrocities perpetrated during the conflict the international community had turned a blind eye and acted only too late.

Armed conflict, wherever it happens, have the same serious consequences on the lives of individuals, families and whole societies. The international community should do everything in its power to prevent conflict and address its root causes. Where conflicts erupt, in whichever part of the world, it should act with vigilance and in its actions, reflect its commitment to uphold and ensure respect for human rights and dignity especially of the most vulnerable.

Thank you