

# Statement to the CEDAW Committee on the DRC

14 July 2013

The proliferation and flow of small arms in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) feeds armed groups and accentuates the instances of sexual violence, criminality and insecurity.

According to the reports on small arms and sexual violence and the testimonies of witnesses of most raped women, the rapists have a weapon at the moment of the barbaric perpetration against women.

This proliferation of light arms compromise the capacity of women to participate to conflict resolution, to the election process, to the reconstruction of the country and reveals the decrease of human security, the violations of human rights and the raise of illegal trade of natural resources caused by weapons.

In terms of peace building, the Government of the DRC builds its work from the National Action Plan for the UNSCR 1325. But this resolution only finds its sense when the State moves from a declaration of engagement to the act of engagement and the significant changes that its application is supposed to bring about.

In the case of the DRC, we note that the consolidation of peace works around multiple initiatives such as political negotiations or reforms to build a democracy based on the Rule of Law. However, if the rights of half the population are not promoted or even recognised, one cannot talk about the Rule of Law or democracy. Furthermore, the peace talks cannot have credibility when their process has not followed an inclusive and participative approach, respecting the sufferings of all layers of the society, in particular those affected by the conflict.

In light of these elements, it seems clear that the situation of women in DRC is appalling. Women are discriminated against by the law and by practices and customs; they are more vulnerable because they are more affected by poverty and illiteracy.

The three pillars of the 3Ps' approach of UNSCR 1325 are affected by inequality in the DRC. Therefore, Congolese women are exposed to serious difficulties regarding their protection and empowerment when participating to the process of decision.

Considering these elements, WILPF recommends:

- To the international community
  - To take political measures to stop the supply of arms in the DRC,
  - To support civil society to promote the appropriation of the Arms Trade Treaty by stakeholders,
  - To reinforce women's participation in the promotion of peace;
  - To bring to the attention of the public institutions of the DRC the complementarity of CEDAW and UNSCR 1325;
  - To take gender into consideration in development policies and programs.
- To the Government of the DRC
  - To ratify the Arms Trade Treaty in order to design and implement measures aimed at harmonizing internal laws on the proliferation of light weapons in the DRC.