



WILPF STATEMENT
Geneva, Switzerland
25 November 2009

Statement to the Commission on the Status of Women (Session 54)

Statement submitted by The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and Global Policy Forum in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

On occasion of the 54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and Global Policy Forum (GPF) take this opportunity to express our unequivocal support for the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) and the outcomes of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly (Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century). We mark our commitment and continued affirmation of the struggle for full recognition and fulfillment of women's human rights and security in all spheres and continue to work to ensure the participation of women in achieving these goals.

We recognize and applaud the efforts prior to and beyond the BPFA to ensure and enhance women's equal participation in all decision-making processes. This extends from the recognition in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the right of equal political participation, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the basis provided in Articles 4, 7 and 8 thereof for initiatives to enhance women's equal participation in all areas of public life, to the urging in Security Council Resolution 1325 for Member States to ensure increased representation of women in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict, the 2003 General Assembly Resolution 58/142 on Women and Political Participation and the reiteration in the BPFA and the reviews thereof that "women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace."

We congratulate the UN General Assembly for its strong and unanimous support for the System-Wide Coherence Resolution to create a new gender equality entity to be headed by a new Under Secretary General (USG). In doing so, the General Assembly endorsed the efforts of women and their allies from around the world who have been advocating for three years for a stronger, better resourced agency on gender equality and women's empowerment. We look forward to the creation of this agency in early 2010, the fifteenth anniversary year of the historic UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. In support of this agency, we similarly urge Secretary General Ban Ki Moon to begin immediately the recruitment process for appointing a strong leader grounded in women's rights and gender equality as the USG



who will lead this process of consolidating the four existing gender entities, so that the USG will be in place, and the new Gender Equality Entity can be operational by the time of the Beijing +15 Review at the CSW54 in March 2010.

WILPF and GPF likewise applaud the UN Security Council's recent adoption of Resolutions 1888 (to end violence against women) and 1889 (on Women, Peace and Security). Significantly, SCR 1888 calls for the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) to lead and drive the UN's work on addressing sexual violence in conflict. We believe it is vital for this SRSG to have a holistic mandate that deals with the issue of sexual violence in the full context of women, peace and security, and we urge the UN and in particular the SC to maintain the recognition reflected in SCR 1889 that both of these latest Resolutions are component parts of a larger and inseparable women, peace and security agenda.

WILPF and GPF remind the SC that in addressing sexual violence it is important not to see women as either victims or agents of change. Rather, it is vital to understand that women as powerful agents for peace, conflict resolution and change may be at risk of sexual violence, and those victimized by such violence do not as a consequence lose their power, voice or ability to participate as peacebuilders in their communities. We look forward to working with an SRSG who understands and advocates this holistic approach, and who works to address issues of protection from sexual violence in their full context of participation, empowerment, peacebuilding, and conflict prevention. This will take full advantage of important groundwork laid by SCRs 1325 and 1820, as well as the support and resources offered by a panoply of civil society groups eager to help the UN implement its women, peace and security agendas.

WILPF and GPF further call on Member States to implement the Millennium Development Goals and broader development goals in a gender-centered manner, without which, fifteen years beyond the BPFA, women's full and effective participation remains severely restricted. Women's full and effective participation in security decision making fora continues to be exceptionally limited - both at the local level and at the global level. While some attempts have been made to increase women's participation at the local level through enhanced training of peacekeepers and a gender mainstreaming action plan that calls for the recognition of women as actors in conflict situations, the UN Security Council still only has a single woman sitting at the Ambassador level. Member States share the responsibility for putting forward strong female as well as male candidates to these and other positions that carry increasing political power and influence.

We find it unacceptable that access to opportunities to work under humane and fair conditions and access to clean water and sanitation, health services and education remain beyond the reach of most women. We do not agree with the commodification and privatization of these essential services, especially in light of the resultant disproportionate negative impact on women of such policies. Unequal access to resources and the resultant unequal economic power and persistent and pervasive under-development is a form of violence in and of itself and, further, makes women particularly vulnerable to violence both during conflict and so-called times of peace. Without inclusive and sustainable development based on a system of gender equality, true and sustainable peace is impossible. WILPF and GPF call upon all states to therefore include a holistic gender perspective when allocating



resources and developing programs to implement the MDGs and any other development practices or projects and insists that the CSW urge them to do so.

We call on Member States urgently to act to ensure that women and men have fair and equal access to natural, economic and political resources so as to ensure equal participation in decision making in the various areas of public and private life including participation in development. We call on governments to ensure that marginalized women, including widows, indigenous, disabled and minority women, are included in programs and processes designed to improve and enhance the access of women to these resources.

We recognize that the participation of women in decision making at all levels includes participation in economic and trade decisions and that the disproportionate negative effects of globalization on women makes their input in the decision making of supra-national institutions, such as the World Trade Organization and the other Bretton Woods Institutions, vital. WILPF and GPF call on Member States to provide mechanisms by which women are guaranteed an opportunity to input into the decision-making processes of these institutions at a local level and that these processes take into account the particular needs of women.

WILPF and GPF reaffirm our commitment to work for collective human security and sustainable peace in collaboration with civil society, governmental and international actors, including within the United Nations system. We look forward to working with others around the world to dismantle the prevailing culture of militarism and create a culture of peace in which racism and discrimination, economic injustice, violence and every form of oppression are absent and in which women are full and equal participants.