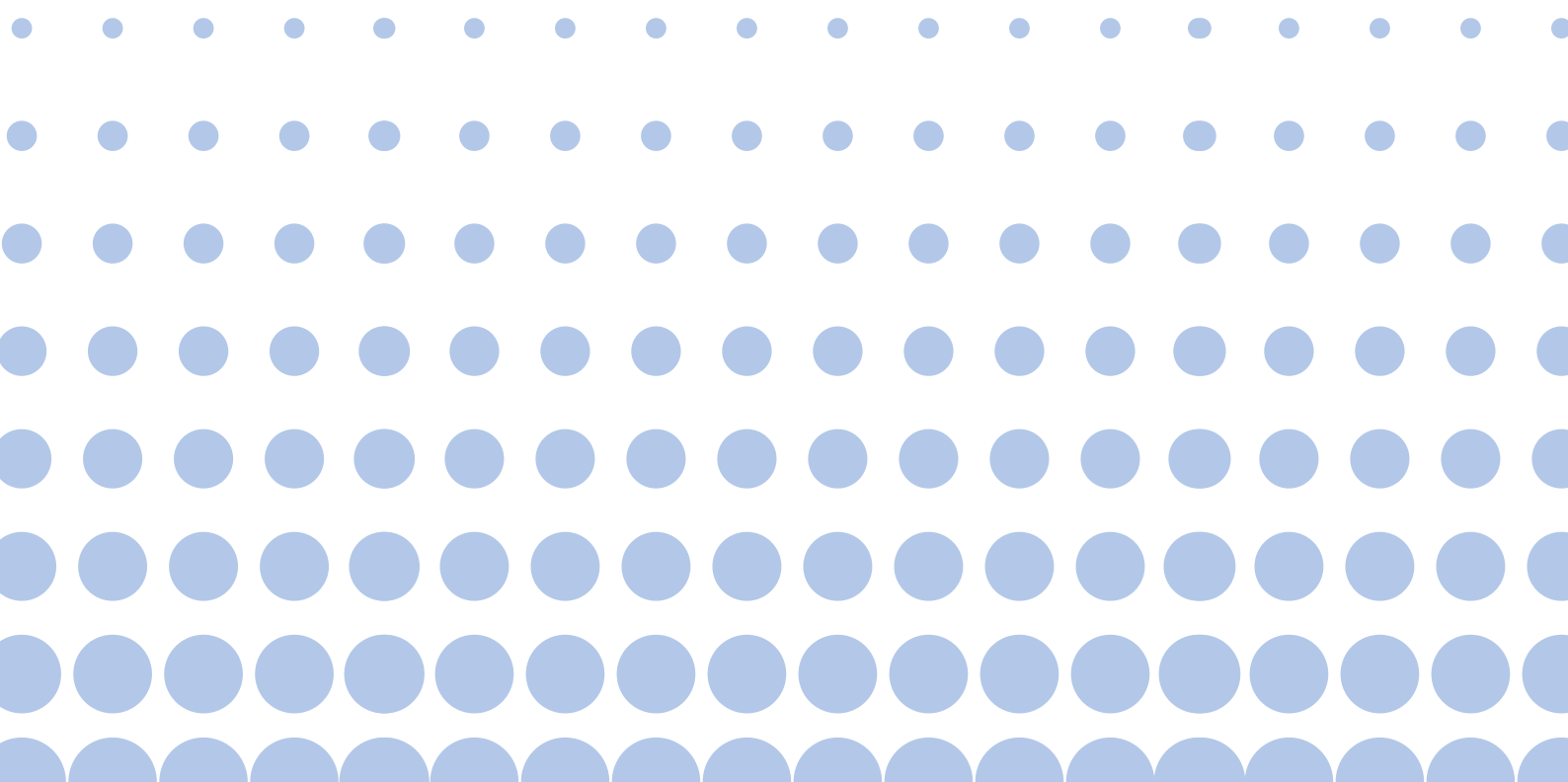




WILPF's Input to Zero Draft of the Pact for the Future

March 2024



Background

In September 2024 the United Nations will hold a Summit for the Future – Multilateral Solutions for a Better Tomorrow, a high-level event which will bring together various country leaders with the aim to reach international consensus on how the international system is to meet existing obligations and new challenges. This document summarises the involvement of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) throughout different consultative phases of the process. It offers an extended version of our submission in relation to the Zero Draft of the Pact for the Future, to be adopted at the Summit; and presents our vision of changes we believe are necessary in order for the multilateral system to deliver on the promises made in the UN Charter.

Chronology of WILPF’s involvement to date

- Submission to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) for the Secretary-General’s New Agenda for Peace, Reaching Critical Will of WILPF, January 2023
- Review of the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism’s Recommendations for Disarmament and Demilitarisation, Reaching Critical Will of WILPF, June 2023
- Review of A New Agenda for Peace’s Recommendations for Disarmament and Demilitarisation, Reaching Critical Will of WILPF, July 2023
- Taking forward the UN’s New Agenda for Peace: WILPF’s Analysis and Recommendations on WPS and Gender, Women, Peace and Security Programme of WILPF, September 2023
- Input for Preparation of Zero Draft of the Pact for the Future, WILPF International Secretariat, December 2023

Below is an extended version of WILPF’s latest input to this process, namely our submission with reflections and suggestions on the Zero Draft of the Pact for the Future.

WILPF's position regarding the future of the multilateral system

In WILPF we believe that our peaceful future rests upon our collective commitment to challenge and transform root causes of violence, including militarism, patriarchy, and capitalism. To that end we have consistently, throughout the various consultative phases:

- Demanded urgent and complete disarmament and demilitarisation, which includes the abolition of nuclear weapons, banning of autonomous weapons systems, divesting from weapons and war, reduction of military spending, and an end to the arms trade, foreign military bases, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and of armed drones and more;
- Called for fulsome consultations for restructuring the multilateral system to uphold the UN Charter and its stated purpose to end war, ensure peace, and to address all dispute resolution through dialogue, including by restructuring the decision-making processes in the UN, in particular the Security Council, including considerations of its abolition or fundamental reform;
- Argued for the necessity to recognise the systemic nature of patriarchal and racist power-dynamics as causal in inequalities and demanded a commitment to the eradication of all forms of gender-based violence through fundamental, structural change in our systems of governance, including through better integration of gender throughout peacebuilding discussions and across different peace and security forums;
- Called for recognition of the vital importance of social reproduction and the role gender relations have in creating conditions for peaceful and just transformation; and
- Put forward recommendations that underscore that demilitarisation has to be an essential component of ecological justice and called for decoupling of development from the concept of growth, recentring it around communal well-being, global justice and ecological regeneration, and ultimately the abolishment of capitalism.

Chapeau

Despite good language on patriarchy in the UN Secretary General's A New Agenda for Peace, the zero draft of the Pact for the Future (henceforth the Pact) does not include any analysis of gendered power dynamics or patriarchy, calling only for "gender equality" and participation of women. Merely mentioning that gender equality and human rights should "guide" the document is not a replacement for transformation of gendered power structures. The Pact should use some of the language from A New Agenda for Peace to recognise the systemic nature of power-dynamics as causal in inequalities, the consequential gender-based violence, and how conflict exacerbates pre-existing patterns

of violence, discrimination, and gender-based inequalities that are sustained by structural inequalities.

To better reflect the above, the Pact could have a dedicated section on gender and intersectionality, or ensure its integration throughout the Pact. Either way the Pact must better address intersectional oppressions and inequalities based on race, class, ethnicity, age, cultural background, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, among others. It should recognise the structural impacts these oppressions have on achieving and maintaining peace, justice, and equality.

Furthermore, the Chapeau should clearly call out states and multilateral bodies as causal to the problems the world faces today. Currently, it talks about “suffering” and “challenges we face,” as if states bear no responsibility. The Pact should be very clear that people around the world don’t find themselves in poverty, inequality, and conflicts by accident. They are subjected to them through the policies and actions, or inactions, of states and multilateral bodies.

Paragraph 2 of the Chapeau should not only list climate change but also other ecological crises when describing the world as being in “acute global peril.” A narrow focus on reducing carbon emissions to tackle the climate crisis can come at the cost of addressing other ecological crises such as biodiversity loss, pollution, desertification, or ocean acidification.

Throughout its different paragraphs, the Chapeau is not sufficiently clear on the necessity to establish mechanisms to ensure a strong and sustainable international governmental and civil society cooperation, grounded in an intersectional understanding of our diverse realities. Language to that end must be introduced. The Pact should articulate support for social movements including feminist movements, human rights defenders, and peacebuilders, and call for them to be funded and meaningfully included. It should condemn shrinking space, reprisals, and repression of civil society.

The subsection International peace and security (paragraph 13) retains too strong of a focus on “threats,” employing militarised language to describe the actions that are being proposed. Instead the focus should be on preventing conflicts. Disarmament, demilitarisation, reduction of military spending, curtailing the international arms trade and arms production, and eliminating nuclear weapons should be named as specific measures used to that end. The paragraph should also reflect the gendered, racialised, and other power dynamics as part of the root causes of armed conflict and violence, and highlight the role of imperialism, economic dominance, and resource extraction in conflict dynamics. Imperative for this paragraph is also the inclusion of a gender lens and support for movements that are working towards peace.

Furthermore, paragraph 17 on Transforming global governance should commit to restructuring or abolishing the UN Security Council, as well as to restructure UN forums to ensure mechanisms against conflict of interest and impunity are put in place.

CHAPTER 1: Sustainable development and financing for developments to secure women's participation

Despite committing to transformative actions in paragraph 19, this section does not recognise or make any commitments to addressing structural impediments to sustainable development. A key impediment is the exploitative relationship inherent to capitalism that currently frames international relations, not least trade and international financial architecture. This section should also call for a structural perspective when tackling poverty and inequality, by dismantling capitalism, racism, patriarchy, ecological destruction, and militarism as part of a “package” in ensuring sustainable development.

Paragraph 40 must call for cancellation of sovereign debt, and oblige states to commit to an immediate reduction in military spending, which will lead to freeing up vital domestic resources that can be redirected towards financing development, the Loss and Damage Fund, climate crisis mitigation and adaptation finance needs, and ecological regeneration. In addition, it should recognise the need to tax the wealthy and corporations.

Furthermore, the Pact must add language to recognise the legal personhood of the Earth and include language on inclusion of civil society in decision-making about sustainable development. There must also be a clear recognition of the impact world's militaries have on the climate and call for an end to the exclusion of military pollution in climate agreements. It must also highlight disarmament and demilitarisation as important aspects of climate action and environmental justice.

The Pact should also recognise that the countries emitting most carbon dioxide are the richest ones, which have garnered their wealth through colonialism, imperialism, and extraction from the Global South. Our strategies need to reflect that reality when adopting policies needed to reach the targets for global emissions reductions, and factor in the existing economic and political disbalance and inequality between countries. Among other things, clear, immediate phase out dates of 2030 for coal, 2035 for gas, and 2040 for oil should be set with emphasis on the phase out to be just and equitable.

The Pact must demonstrate its serious commitment to protecting the planet by recognising the need to re-think economic growth as part of sustainable development, despite its current inclusion in SDG 8. There is no evidence that economic growth can be decoupled from resource consumption and extraction, which undermine all other sustainable development goals. Thus the Pact should call for the decoupling of development from the concept of growth, reversing of the overexploitation of natural resources, and recenter development around communal well-being, global justice and ecological regeneration, and ensure that degrowth policies are at the centre of all future economic planning.

Paragraph 22 makes an important link between human rights and Sustainable Development Goals, but the Pact must go beyond an “acknowledgement” of this link. Among other things, the Pact should reflect the human rights to food, water, and housing.

CHAPTER 2: International Peace and Security

This section should recognise that militarisation is a key impediment to diplomacy and peace, and it should avoid using militarised language that plays on people’s fears. For example, in paragraphs 48 and 49, the Pact uses the language of new international threats, which are not spelled out, creating a sense of insecurity that invites military action. This must be replaced with language of prevention, focusing on disarmament and demilitarisation as a key tool to preventing conflicts.

The Pact should support the call in A New Agenda for Peace for an updated UN study on the social and economic impacts of military spending, obliging states to immediately reduce military spending with the aim of total elimination of weapons production within five years and redirecting towards communal well-being and ecological regeneration.

Furthermore, the Pact should compel divestment from weapons producers and companies that develop or produce surveillance and carceral technologies; recognising the imperative of ending privatisation of military production and the influence of corporate interest over national policies that perpetuate war, undermine disarmament, and preclude a rational analysis of spending priorities. The Pact must also oblige states to close foreign military bases, which aggravate tensions and facilitate the launch of wars and occupations.

In discussing the interconnection between international peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights (paragraph 50) the Pact must also highlight social justice, including the centrality of equal access to societal good, and equality within and between countries as one of the pillars of international peace.

Paragraphs 53 and 79 should address the dismantling, not the erosion, of international norms and law—this is not a natural process of erosion but a deliberate and willful violation of international law, and the Pact should urge compliance and strengthening norms and laws for disarmament and arms control.

Paragraph 55 should call on all states to endorse and implement the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas.

Paragraph 57 should go beyond highlighting the humanitarian funding gap as an issue to be dealt with in regards to protracted displacement. The Pact should encourage the global community and individual states to remove the distinction between citizens and non-citizens in enjoyment of human rights, in particular social and economic rights.

Paragraph 58 should reflect how patriarchy and militarised masculinities are part of the root causes of armed conflict and must be dismantled to prevent violence, including gender-based violence. The paragraph should also include stronger language on Women, Peace and Security, recognising that the current structures of decision-making on peace and security are themselves patriarchal and that they need to be transformed. Participation in decision-making should extend beyond women to also include grassroots activists, peacebuilders, feminists, human rights defenders, and impacted communities.

Paragraph 59 is insufficient considering the prevalence of violence against women and girls in all regions of the world. It should be more clear about women and girls being deprived of their right to live free from violence, in all spheres of life, private and public. Violence is one of the strongest patriarchal mechanisms to oppress women and girls and to prevent them from fully participating in all spheres of society. The Pact should demand all actors step up their efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, to guarantee effective legal and social protection from violence as well as comprehensive, empowering support based on human rights and needs of women and girls survivors of violence. This should include, among other things, the right to economic support and housing, including to women and girls facing multiple and intersecting forms of violence, and to accelerate and step up action to achieve gender equality in all domains.

The language in paragraph 66, echoing the language of national sovereignty and member states' responsibility to prevent conflicts, risks encouraging militarised governance disguised behind human rights language.

With respect to the discussion regarding provision of adequate, sustainable, flexible, and predictable financing to peacebuilding efforts (paragraph 67), there must also be a clear commitment to ensure that the decisions on financing take into account diverse gender perspectives. Furthermore, the Pact should clearly commit to financing diverse feminist movements and civil society working for peace.

Paragraph 68 calls for the assistance of the international financial institutions in addressing the underlying causes of instability. At the same time, the policies and approaches of these institutions contribute greatly to instability and impede sustainable peace. This paragraph must clearly state the imperative of transforming international financial institutions before any close cooperation can be established.

Paragraph 69 calls for considering possible security risks of climate change—which, if considered as such—will justify ever-increasing military expenditure, diverting attention away from the need for systemic transformation for real climate justice. The world’s biggest emitters of green house gases are spending, on average, 2.3 times as much on arming their borders as they are on climate finance. People fleeing the impacts of the climate crisis, such as those fleeing due to loss of coastal land, floods and fires, should not be treated as a "security threat" justifying ever increasing militarised borders in the global north. The climate crisis does not need securitised or militarised solutions; it needs an end to fossil fuels, a reduction in production and consumption, and investment in both adaptation and mitigation. This paragraph should warn against the securitisation or militarisation of responses to the climate crisis.

In discussing enforcement actions in paragraphs 73 and 74, the Pact must emphasise that enforcement actions should be a last resort and that demilitarisation should be at the centre of our new global pact.

Paragraphs 76 and 77 on counterterrorism should be deleted. They are approaching the topic of violent extremism in a militarised as opposed to human rights-centered way. This is dangerous language that leaves too much room for interpretation about who is, or will be, considered violent and extreme. The increasing labeling of civil society organisations, dissidents, and activists as terrorists is of particular concern here.

Paragraph 79 should call on all states that have not yet done so to join and implement the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Paragraph 81 on nuclear energy should be removed as the production of nuclear power causes grave harm to human health and the environment and as such is not a solution to the climate crisis.

Paragraph 84 should go beyond “illicit” trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW). While strengthening the global mechanisms referenced here is important, so too is addressing the broader arms trade, including through the full and effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty, and by curtailing the profits and political influence that can be garnered by arms producing companies.

Paragraph 85 needs to acknowledge the potential of both state and non-state actors to abuse new technologies, especially because states are the primary developers, users, and profiteers of such technology.

In addition to paragraph 86’s support for a treaty to prevent an arms race in outer space, which we support, the Pact should also call on all states to refrain from placing or using weapons in outer space at all times under any circumstances.

Paragraph 87 should add a call to all states and non-state actors to refrain from the malicious use of information and communications technologies, including cyber attacks against civilian infrastructure, internet shutdowns, and surveillance or oppression of activists and political dissidents.

We welcome the call in paragraph 88 for the negotiations of a treaty on autonomous weapons, but urge the paragraph to reflect the UN Secretary-General's call for these negotiations to be concluded by 2026.

Paragraph 89 should prohibit the development of military applications of artificial intelligence, not encourage states to develop principles for it.

CHAPTER 3: Science and Technology

This chapter needs to incorporate more analysis on the gendered and racial dimensions of the development and uses of technology as well as to recognise the importance of Indigenous perspectives and knowledge of handling nature and human relations wisely in decision-making on science and technology. In addition, it should clearly state that support will be provided to Indigenous community-based solutions for self-sufficient, local, community-based water and food security.

This section should also recognise recent reports from UN Special Rapporteurs about the risks of technology for discrimination of people of colour, migrants, LGBTQ+ people, and women. It should call for an end to the use of technologies such as predictive policing software, border surveillance and militarisation, and other harmful technologies that undermine human rights and dignity.

CHAPTER 4: Youth

The points contained in the section on youth should be integrated throughout the Pact rather than confined to a separate chapter. Many of the points relate to people beyond youth; for example, paragraph's 105 reference to establishing robust social security systems and social protection floors, and to sexual and reproductive health, should be applied to everyone, not just youth. Similarly, paragraph 107 is positive on addressing barriers to youth participation, but these barriers should also be recognised in other areas, e.g., in relation to Women, Peace, and Security. Paragraph 110 on reprisals and protection for young people who engage with the UN is also a crucial recognition, but women, civil society, LGBTQ+ people, human rights defenders, Land and Water Protectors, and other groups also experience these reprisals and are in need of protection. The Pact must therefore include more universal commitments around these issues, reflecting states' international obligations.

CHAPTER 5: Global Governance

This section should commit to fundamentally restructure the UN Security Council through, among other things, elimination of the veto and permanent membership. If such restructuring is impossible, the UN Security Council should be abolished.

This section should also demand from states an absolute commitment to uphold international law, political commitments, funding obligations, and the provisions of the UN Charter in order to participate in multilateral spaces, and consider the necessity of establishing ministries for peace in each state to assist in compliance. It should also call for legal and policy development to end impunity with particular emphasis on the role of the International Criminal Court.

With respect to funding obligations the Pact must highlight the obligation to ensure that adequate, predictable, and sustainable financing is made available for all regions and subregions.

Paragraph 121 should include more systematic engagement of non-governmental organisations, across all UN fora, including with the Secretariat. Furthermore, it should include language that condemns and acts to stop reprisals against those who engage with the UN system and reprisals against civil society in general.

Paragraph 124 affirms commitment to the Peacebuilding Commission and encourages cooperation with regional and subregional organisations. As highlighted in submissions in January 2023, we argue that equally important is a commitment to increase consultation with civil society and promote inclusion of their suggestions for non-violent solutions to conflicts and for reconciliation.

We support the language in paragraph 134 of development going beyond gross domestic product, but think that the Pact can go beyond this and introduce the language of degrowth.

Paragraphs 136 to 144 address the issue of international financial architecture. Moving beyond a recognition that the architecture needs to be “modernised,” this section must recognise that the international financial architecture is framed by capitalist political economy and as such is harmful for the well-being of people, animals, and the planet. It is insufficient to reform the architecture; we must transform it. The new architecture should be built on cooperation, interdependence, and the principles of care and solidarity, instead of profit and exploitation. Furthermore, while we welcome the language of debt relief in paragraph 141 we call on all sovereign debt to be cancelled so that countries can redirect funding into investments for public infrastructure and building economies that are just, equitable, climate resilient, and sustainable.

Paragraph 22 makes an important link between human rights and Sustainable Development Goals, but the Pact must go beyond an “acknowledgement” of this link. Among other things, the Pact should reflect the human rights to food, water, and housing.