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UN Human Rights Council, 58th session (24 February to 4 April 2025)

Item 3 General debate

Statement on the OHCHR report “Impact of arms transfers on human rights (A/HRC/58/41)”¹

Speaker: Daphné Genatio

The OHCHR report A/HRC/58/41 starkly illustrates the failure of governance systems overseeing arms transfers, which have enabled arms-producing States and weapon companies to prioritise profit and perceived power over people’s rights. Tragically, this is not new. As early as 1915, WILPF identified “the private profits accruing from the great armament factories” as “a powerful hindrance to the abolition of war.”²

The OHCHR report highlights a systemic failure by arms-exporting States and the arms industry at large to exercise due diligence in arms transfers decisions and prevent prohibited transfers, even when there is clear evidence of the risk of violations of international law. We could not agree more with the High Commissioner’s unequivocal message that “arms transfers are not a human rights-free zone.”³ We also agree that this issue must be the object of continued attention.⁴ The Human Rights Council and its mechanisms are vital in scrutinising the human rights impacts of arms transfers, particularly in the current context of soaring military spending. This expenditure diverts critical resources from the protection of people’s rights and lives, humanitarian aid, and climate change mitigation, among other things.

WILPF welcomes the priority areas for action outlined in the OHCHR report. Among these, scrutinizing the role of private actors involved in the arms trade— including in logistics, transport, banking, and insurance — is paramount. Given the unacceptable gaps in access to justice for arms transfer decisions, which are often linked to gross violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, this area demands urgent attention and further action.

We call on all States to:

- actively support and strengthen OHCHR’s work in this area.
- take into account the OHCHR findings and recommendations when taking measures—at national, regional, and international levels — to ensure compliance with international human rights law and other branches of international law in arms transfer policy and decision-making.

¹ **Note:** WILPF made a written contribution to this report. See “Submission to OHCHR on Gaps and Future Steps in Arms Transfers and Human Rights”, 31 October 2024, available at [this link](#)

² Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, “WILPF Resolutions, 1st Congress,” The Hague, Netherlands, 1915, available at [this link](#)

³ “Arms transfers are not a human rights-free zone - UN report”, available at [this link](#). See also “Impact of arms transfers on human rights, Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights”, UN Index A/HRC/58/41, Summary, available at [this link](#).

⁴ A/HRC/58/41, Summary and paragraph 41.

- provide sustained funding and robust support to civil society actors advocating for arms control and disarmament, as well as those researching and documenting the human rights impacts of arms transfers.