

**Women's International League for Peace and Freedom  
Statement to the Fifth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty  
Gender-Based Violence, 26 August 2019**

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) welcomes the decision to focus the Fifth Conference of States Parties on gender and gender-based violence. As an organisation that has long been at the forefront of feminist advocacy for disarmament, WILPF spearheaded the "Make it Binding" campaign that led to the inclusion of gender-based violence (GBV) in the Arms Trade Treaty. We believe this is an important opportunity to ensure that gendered considerations are at the heart of all disarmament and arms control efforts.

It needs to be underscored that all conventional weapons can—and have been—used to inflict violence on people based on discriminating norms and practices relating to their specific sex or gender role in society. This is why export officials must conduct a risk assessment on GBV for every single arms export license application. They must assess the risk of sexual violence, domestic violence, impact on girls' education, impact on women's reproductive health, impacts on LGBT rights, or the use of sex as a signifier in targeting attacks or conducting post-strike analyses. They must also look to how weapons are used to exacerbate or prop-up discriminatory gender-based social norms and power inequalities in social, economic, and political spheres of life. For example, it has been shown that the proliferation of arms in any given context has a negative impact on women's equality within the household, their mobility, and their political participation. Widespread possession and use of weapons tends to prevent women from fully participating in public and political life, and to hinder their economic empowerment—which also qualifies as GBV.

For several years WILPF has published reports and briefing papers that examine the relationship between gender-based violence and the international arms trade and explosive weapons use, as well guidance specific to ATT implementation and case studies of existing practice. We look forward to sharing this expertise with states parties and organisations toward a productive CSP outcome but more importantly, toward ending gender-based violence.

In that regard, we have a few comments on the draft decisions tabled by the President of this CSP that we hope will be useful to states in further developing and agreeing upon a meaningful outcome from this meeting.

We welcome the draft's recognition that it is key to not just increase the number of women in the room but to ensure their meaningful participation—just putting women into seats for the sake of numerical equality will undermine this objective overall. Participation is about being in a position to contribute to policy development, to lead, and to be heard. We also want to note that diversity in our discussions cannot just be about women's participation alone. Achieving better outcome also requires the meaningful participation of those who have experienced arms-related GBV particularly in local contexts, and survivors more broadly of gun violence and the bombardment of towns and cities. It means including non-binary and other LGBT+ people and other marginalised communities. They should be included on delegations and their perspectives should be heard.

We welcome the paper's reflection of the interest in understanding more on the practicalities of Article 7(4) risk assessment, as well as for continuing to look at gender across all aspect of the Treaty, and not only within Articles 6 and 7. We also welcome the recognition of relevance of the Sustainable Development Goals and the women, peace and security resolutions for the ATT. The decision should also acknowledge and reflect upon the connections with human rights mechanisms and other treaty bodies that have been advancing understandings of the relationship between the arms trade and GBV, such as Human Rights Council resolutions A/HRC/41/L.22/Rev.1, 24/35, and 32/12; the Committee on the Elimination of Violence and Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee); and the Committee on Economic and Social Rights.

We welcome the draft decisions related to achieving gender balance in delegations and events, including to have the ATT Secretariat report to the CSPs on this issue. In relation to the decision to have the sponsorship programme consider gender balance as one of its selection criteria, we urge the programme to also report back on this, including what obstacles they encounter.

The draft decision to encourage states to collect gender-disaggregated data and make it publicly available is good, and we'd encourage states to also report back on that.

We support the encouragement to make gender and gender-based violence information and materials more accessible. In that vein, we would like to announce that WILPF is creating a gender and disarmament database, to launch hopefully in October, that will compile resources, publications, presentations, and much more that provide gender perspectives and analysis across a range of disarmament topics including the arms trade.

In relation to the decisions on the gender-based violence risk assessments, we want to indicate our willingness to work with the Working Group on Effective Treaty Implementation to advance these goals, including the development of training guides or materials. WILPF has already produced several resources that should be useful in this regard.

In relation to a "GBV question" to be added to the annual report templates, we suggest more clarity on that this could include. It could mean asking states parties to report on how GBV is included in their risk assessment processes and if they are or are not denying transfers because of GBV. It could also include a question about gender diversity in their delegations and policymaking on these issues.

In relation to states parties agreeing to review progress on gender and GBV on an ongoing basis, we would suggest that they agree to review progress on meeting the gender diversity and GBV-prevention related actions agreed at this conference.

Finally, and as a general comment, while the document reflects actions and activities that are very relevant within the context of UN meetings and to build understanding here, they do not necessarily reflect the type of meaningful change in perspective, policy, and practice that will have an impact on the ground. The understanding and knowledge that accumulates here as a result of these recommendations must be channelled into policy and programming at local and national levels.

We look forward to further discussions on this paper and the crucial issues of ending GBV through better implementation of the ATT over the rest of this week and beyond. WILPF stands ready to offer our expertise and the national and local experiences of our members to help delegations in the work ahead.