

# Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Ligue Internationale de Femmes pour la Paix et la Liberté

Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad

Consultative Status with UN ECOSOC, UNCTAD and UNESCO; Special Consultative Relations with FAO, ILO, and UNICEF.



26 October 2009

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## First Secretary General

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Dear Ambassador,

In 1995 the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom organized the Peace Train to attend the UN Fourth World Conference on Women and coordinated the Peace Tent in Beijing. We literally traveled from Helsinki to Beijing by train, with 240 women and men from 42 nations. WILPF is disappointed that this third review of the Beijing Platform for Action is not organized in the form of a World Conference and that the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is only planning to spend two days discussing this important review.

The UNECE has the chance to change this negative note into a positive one, by not purely focusing on gender and the economic / financial crisis and corporate sector, but to add major developments concerning women, peace and security to their agenda. Economic prosperity is inextricably linked with peace and development, which in turn is inextricably linked to equality between women and men. We would like to request your attention to Critical Area E of the Platform for Action which focuses on women and armed conflict.

## Women to lead:

In 1995, as portrayed in Critical Area E, it was decided that "equal access and full participation of women in power structures and their full involvement in all efforts for the prevention and resolution of conflicts are essential for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security". Women are currently still significantly underrepresented in decision making positions that influence peace-keeping, preventive diplomacy and peace negotiations. Another small step was taken in this direction by the UN Security Council when they adopted Resolution 1889.

Major developments have taken place. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of September the General Assembly adopted a resolution amalgamating four United Nations agencies and offices (UNIFEM, DAW, OSAGI and INSTRAW) to create a new single entity to promote the full enjoyment of all human rights by women worldwide and to work towards gender equality. The to-be appointed Under Secretary-General for Women requires substantial funding, a strong mandate and the full support of Member States to fulfill this task. The UNECE should discuss this development from a financial perspective and look into its potential for the further implementation of the Platform for Action.

## Women to disarm:

So far we have established that in order to ensure sufficient representation of women in decision-making positions, investments need to be made. In Beijing the representatives adopted Strategic Objective E.2 to "reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments". WILPF believes that most military expenditures are excessive and that governments need to convert these resources for the advancement of women.

In addition, the Committee on the Status of Women urged the Member States in 2008 to "ensure that adequate resources are allocated for activities targeting persistent serious obstacles to the advancement of women in situations of armed conflict and in conflicts of

other types, wars of aggression, foreign occupation, colonial or other alien domination as well as terrorism”.

Almost fifteen years down the line we have not seen sufficient disarmament and funding towards peaceful purposes and the advancement of women, but current developments allow us to step up to that for which we aimed. The new UN Gender entity and the Office of the Under Secretary-General for Women require true investment and commitment.

### **Accountability:**

The Beijing Platform for Action, Critical Area E established that “systematic rape of women in war situations...must be stopped immediately, while perpetrators of such crimes must be punished”. The protection of women living in situations of armed conflict is part of Strategic Objective E.1. The continuous widespread violation of women is a testimony of the lack of meeting this Objective.

Security Council Resolution 1888, adopted on 23 September 2009, reaffirms SCR 1325 and 1820 and outlines actions which the UN and Member States can take to prevent sexual violence and end impunity. To enforce accountability perpetrators of sexual violence should be brought to justice and survivors need to be ensured of access to justice. It is important that the Secretary-General is supported in deploying teams of experts to cases of concern, especially concerning non-state actors, to assist national authorities to strengthen the rule of law and to “appoint a Special Representative to provide coherent and strategic leadership” to address sexual violence in armed conflict.

Timely, objective, accurate and reliable information on the prevalence of sexual violence is essential to end impunity – information which is not only focused on past violations, but can be used as an early-warning system. In the Beijing+15 Review it is important to focus on conflict situations which deserve the attention but have not been put on the Security’s Council agenda yet. Successful data collection is only possible via the provision of services by humanitarian organizations which require donor support.

### **Towards Beijing+15:**

WILPF urges the UNECE to integrate the following three aspects to its Beijing+15 agenda, as they all require effective and timely follow-up:

- Leadership: Discuss new developments in the UN and ensure that these are met with substantial support.
- Disarmament: Reinvest excessive military expenditure towards the advancement of women through providing sufficient funding for the new UN Gender entity and the office of the Under-Secretary General for Women.
- Accountability: Adhere to the demand of the Security Council and enforce appropriate military disciplinary measures, bring perpetrators of sexual violence to justice, ensure access to justice for survivors, support the team of experts to strengthen the rule of law and ensure sufficient funding for the gathering of timely, objective, accurate and reliable information.

Yours sincerely,



Susi Snyder  
Secretary-General