



Oral Statement on Agenda Item 4: General Debate

“You Get What You Pay For – Disarm for Human Rights”

Thank you Mr. President.

Security is one of the most fundamental human rights. Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.”¹ The concept of security however, has long been closely connected to the nation-state; to national security grounded in military superiority and the threat or use of force.

In order to ensure human rights, a shift in the concept of security from a paradigm of national security to human security is essential. Human security can broadly be defined as the safety of individuals from violence, socio-economic and political inequity, poverty, disease and natural disasters². This security can not be assured by military means alone. A notion of security as human security would reduce the importance of weapons and military might.

In the world today, 1464 billion dollars in total or 216 dollars per person are spent every year on weapons and military infrastructure³. Arms build-up not only fosters the notion of security as military strengths, but also holds up resources needed for improved protection of human rights.

By looking at the numbers it is easy to see how disarmament can be a way to achieve greater protection of human rights. For the cost of one F-16 Fighter jet you could construct over 92 000 clean water wells, improving enjoyment of the right to water.⁴

Similarly, to realise the right to free education for all, set out in article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁵, the world would only have to spend about 11 billion dollars⁶, less than 1% of current global military spending, or about one dollar and sixty cents per person per year.

We, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom call for disarmament as a way to fulfil state commitments to human rights. The money is there, and you will get what you pay for.

Thank you

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¹ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 3

² Human Security Centre, The University of British Columbia

³ SIPRI Yearbook 2009

⁴ Cost of War Calculator

⁵ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26

⁶ UNESCO, http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.phpURL_ID=41371&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html