Joint statement on gender and disarmament
17 October 2018

The negative impacts of patriarchy on our society are on full display when it comes to weapons, war, and militarism. The dominant discourse on these subjects tends to reinforce the highly problematic gendered norm that men are violent and powerful and women are vulnerable and need to be protected.

Challenging these norms is an important aspect of our work in First Committee, where we must promote the norm that disarmament is a process of strength, rationality, and justice. That peace and nonviolence are credible objectives. That we can work collectively to achieve security through disarmament and restrictions on the use of force and violence.

Recently, some disarmament forums have taken up the task to highlight the importance of gender diversity and the inclusion of women in their processes.

- The UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons recognises “that the equal, full and effective participation of both women and men is an essential factor for the promotion and attainment of sustainable peace and security, and committed to supporting and strengthening the effective participation of women in nuclear disarmament.”
- The Chair’s summary of the 2017 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Preparatory Committee reflects that NPT states parties “were encouraged, in accordance with their commitments under United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, actively to support participation of female delegates in their own NPT delegations and through support for sponsorship programs.”
- The final report of the Third Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons (SALW) recognises the importance of eradicating the illicit trade in SALW for combating gender-based violence, and the need for states to mainstream gender dimensions in their implementation of the Programme of Action, among other things.

Women’s participation is important to our work. But so is the incorporation of a gender analysis. This includes looking at how gender norms affect disarmament policies and practices, and how we can change them in order to facilitate progress both in disarmament and gender justice.

Other forums have started to do this. For example:

- At the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) in August, the government of Canada hosted a side event with civil society groups to provide an intersectional feminist analysis of autonomous weapon systems.
- In trainings for parliamentarians and gender advocates organised this year by the UN Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, participants identified ways to challenge the strong social and cultural association between masculinity and guns.

These developments are very welcome and should be continued and further developed in as many disarmament forums as possible. But we need to do more. Several states have begun the work of developing feminist foreign policies. These policies require disarmament and nonviolence to be at the core of their objectives and their processes.

In this context:

We call on First Committee delegates to collaborate with civil society to make First Committee resolutions more gender-sensitive.

We urge them to improve gender and other forms of diversity in their disarmament delegations, systematically record and publish data on the composition of their delegations, and share their experiences of including gender perspectives in their disarmament policies and initiatives.

We call on all countries to effectively implement provisions against gender-based violence in the Arms Trade Treaty, the UN Programme of Action, and other instruments dealing with weapons proliferation and use.
We call on governments to research and promote the linkages between sustainable development, gender justice, and disarmament. We also urge the consideration of the impacts that weapons have on diverse populations.

A gender perspective should be integral to any discussion about new or emerging weapon technologies, lest debates on algorithm-based violence and innovations in science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament risk perpetuating structural biases and harmful gender-stereotypes.

Finally, we urge that governments invest in gender justice and other human rights and sustainable development instead of militarism.

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Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy  
African Council of Religious Leaders – Religions for Peace  
Article 36  
Catholic Council for Justice and Peace of Japan  
Center for Peace Education-Miriam College  
Global Campaign for Peace Education  
International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) Women’s Network  
International Institute on Peace Education  
International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War  
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns  
Mines Action Canada  
Mines Advisory Group  
Nobel Women’s Initiative  
Oxfam  
PAX  
Pax Christi Aotearoa-New Zealand  
Peace Boat US  
Project Ploughshares  
Saferworld  
Sehlac Network  
Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom  
World Beyond War  
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Youth Arts New York/Hibakusha Stories