
WILPF – Women’s International league for Peace and Freedom

WHAT WE BELIEVE:

Nuclear disarmament is inevitable. The majority of governments and people want disarmament and will eventually succeed in eliminating these suicidal, genocidal and ecocidal weapons. The movement for a world free of nuclear weapons has been expressed from the moment the government of the United States of America succeeded in producing the atomic bomb, and it will continue until it succeeds in ending the nuclear age. This brutal era of belief in war and violence will be remembered by future generations as an embarrassing lapse in human evolution.

Nuclear disarmament is democracy. The peoples of the world have shown through polls and various demonstrations of the public conscience, that they oppose nuclear weapons and support their quick abolition. The vast majority of governments also express support for nuclear abolition, but those expressions have not been strong, loud, or coordinated enough to force those governments with nuclear weapons to get rid of them.

Nuclear disarmament will require coordinated and sustained effort on the part of governments, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations. Reaching Critical Will is WILPF's initiative to encourage people to act and contribute to a variety of international fora. For non-governmental organizations and concerned individuals to act, they need information, primary documents and analysis. Reaching Critical Will collects, packages and often translates disarmament-related information into terms ordinary people can understand.

WHAT WE DO:

Reaching Critical Will is an initiative from [the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom](#) that started in 1999 with a single focus: **to increase the quality and quantity of non-governmental organization preparation for and participation in the 2000 Review of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.** At that time, leaders in the peace and disarmament movements identified the need for a critical mass of political will to be exerted to encourage a positive outcome of the 2000 meeting of 187 governments. Since then, the initiative has expanded to provide primary resources and information around other disarmament fora, namely the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, and the General Assembly First Committee which is focused on Disarmament and International Security. Our services include:

- Centralizing and disseminating information about intergovernmental meetings that discuss nuclear weapons and their elimination;
- Maintaining a centralized electronic repository of information, and information services through our website and [email lists](#);
- Increasing the quality and quantity of NGO preparation and participation in these processes;
- Increasing the quality and quantity of NGO interaction with governments and the United Nations and its family of Specialized Agencies;
- Providing logistical support in facilitating activities before and during these fora tailored for policy-makers and the public.

WILPF-Statement to the disarmament Conference Geneva 2005

Distinguished Delegates,

Since 1984, a group of Geneva-based NGOs, together with members of the NGO Working Group on Peace have held a seminar to mark International Women's Day – 8 March – in tribute to the tireless work done by women around the world for the achievement of justice, peace and security. We again use this opportunity to engage the public and governments to look holistically at issues of peace and security, and to recognize the centuries' old demand of women for nations to totally and universally disarm.

Women mobilize support for disarmament and peace. In the last century alone, educational and petition campaigns, such as the more than nine million signatures collected and sent to the 1926 disarmament conference in Geneva, or the one initiated in 1959 by the European Movement of Women Against Nuclear Armament, have rallied wide public support for general and nuclear disarmament. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom along with many other organizations refused to accept the cold war barriers and worked to break them down through East – West dialogues and many other shared events to end the arms race and build peaceful cooperation. Women demonstrated against the build-up of multilateral nuclear forces in Europe, as they did, for example at the NATO conference in the Netherlands in 1964. In the 1960s, 100,000 women in 110 American communities left their homes and offices in a national "strike" for a nuclear test ban, sparked by Boston physicians' documentation of the presence of Strontium-90, a by-product of nuclear tests, in the teeth of children across the U.S. and beyond. Millions of women and men rallied in the cities of Europe and marched across borders to mark their opposition to the deployment of nuclear missiles and radiological weapons. We all remember how the women of Greenham Common left their homes to dedicate themselves to peace as men have often left their homes to fight wars.

Let us be clear: we do not assert that women are "by nature" more peaceful than men. Women are socialized to be the caretakers and nurturers of their families and communities; yet in countries the world over – from the developed to developing nations – many men assume the role of "protectors" and "defenders" and often seek to maintain this role through the possession of weapons, while women in their nurturing role often encourage this step towards "manhood". We recognize that women are also actors in conflict – women take up arms, engage in conflict and even perpetuate it. It is not enough for us to bring a few more women into security discussions and negotiations; just as men differ vastly in their perceptions of issues of importance, just one participant in negotiations cannot represent women in all their diversities.

Furthermore, increased dialogue with and participation of NGOs in all disarmament efforts will facilitate a much broader, more comprehensive understanding of security, one that can form the basis of a windfall of new security agreements and treaties. The stalemate in moving disarmament forward must be broken now.

Women have developed an expanded expertise on these issues over the years and are eager , along with many other members of civil society and non-governmental organizations, to work with you and your ministries at the Capitols to move forward. In 1997, a Model Nuclear Weapons Convention was submitted to the General Assembly by Costa Rica stating that the model sets forth "the legal, technical and political issues that should be considered in order to obtain an actual nuclear weapons convention."

South Africa submitted a Working Paper to this body in 2002, outlining some suggestions and food for thought on a Fissile Materials Treaty. The time is ripe to negotiate this treaty now in order to address the problems of nuclear proliferation. Large sectors of world civil Society stand at the ready to do whatever they can to assist in these negotiations- you in the CD have the power to open your doors to us; Paragraph 41 of the rules of procedure recognizes that the Conference may decide to invite specialized agencies, the IAEA and other organs of the UN system to provide information We are prepared to accept your invitation, and look forward to receiving it.

This body has struggled for eight long years to move forward. It will not be able to make substantive breakthroughs as long as governments continue to equate security with armaments. We have not seen an increase in global security that matches the global increases in military spending; rather, we have seen increased proliferation of weapons, increased threats from non-state actors, and decreased human security.

Our focus during this year's seminar was on nuclear weapons, on the role that these ecocidal, suicidal and genocidal weapons play in a world struggling to recognize and move towards a holistic perception of security – one that includes environmental protection, protection of all actors effected by all phases of conflict, and that integrates and understands the reasons that make people pick up arms in order to disarm.

In a large part, the NGOs that monitor your discussions here, the NGOs that will flock to New York to monitor and bring public attention to the NPT Review Conference, the NGOs that have organized massive demonstrations in opposition to nuclear weapons, the NGOs that have brought organized pressure on governments to negotiate the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty – many of these NGOs comprise women, whose dedication to the abolition of nuclear weapons is based on their unique, understanding of the evil of these weapons.

While we laud the CD's decision taken last year that codifies the basic rules of engagement with disarmament NGOs, we urge you to review NGO participation and access to all international disarmament fora, and to understand, as Croatia has, "the growing beneficial role that civil society plays in the field of disarmament... (which) may give additional impetus to initiatives to break the deadlock and finally move the multilateral disarmament agenda forward." We urge you to heed the advice of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who called for "more organized and sustained dialogue with the NGO community", recognizing that more effective engagement with NGOs increases the likelihood that United Nations decisions will be better understood and supported by a broad and diverse public.

The culture of militarism that has gained ground the world over is pushing the cornerstone of the disarmament regime, the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, toward a dangerous precipice. We are all aware of the significant backsliding from key advancements made at the 2000 Review Conference, and know that drastic measures are needed in order to arrest this development.

The Conference on Disarmament has a unique opportunity to do so at the forthcoming 7TH NPT Review Conference, addressing the concerns and priorities of all States parties, and working to strengthen both the non-proliferation and the disarmament obligations of the Treaty. If the CD is able to adopt a program of work and start substantive discussions on nuclear disarmament, a fissile materials treaty, the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and/or other items on the proposed agenda, you will be endowing the Review Conference with a much needed head-start on its own work. No other body, no other diplomats, have the opportunity that you do to influence a positive start at the Review, to erode the paralysis that blocked the Preparatory Committee.

Time is growing short, in the next few months, all actors within the international disarmament community must do everything they can to use this Conference as a tool for ensuring the human security of all peoples, everywhere.

notes:

1. Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp was set up in 1981, after women marched 180 kilometres from Cardiff, Wales, to Greenham Common to protest the British government's decision to allow 96 cruise missiles to be deployed at the Greenham Common US Air Force base. It was disbanded after 19 years of action, in 2000.

2. Model Nuclear Weapons Convention, UN Document A/C.1/52/7.

<http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/political/cd/speeches02/safrfissilewpcd.html>

3. CD/8/Rev.9 Paragraph 41

4. Statement by H.E. Vladimir Drobnyak, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Croatia at the General Assembly First Committee 59th session, 11 October, 2004.

Available at:

<http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/political/1com/1com04/statements/croatia.pdf>

5. The Secretary-General's report on the work of the Panel of Eminent Persons on Civil Society and UN Relationships, A/59/