

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR **PEACE & FREEDOM**



Statement on Nigeria

October 2011

The Nigeria Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), a women's peace organization, writes this statement as Nigeria takes the Presidency of the UN Security Council in October 2011 which will see Nigeria preside over the annual Women, Peace and Security Open Debate. We would like to build on this opportunity to link international and national efforts to advance women's rights around the world and at home in Nigeria. Specific and immediate actions are needed in many countries including in Nigeria to prevent insecurity, promote equality and protect women's rights. It is critical at this time that there is an increased focus on conflict prevention and enhancing women's participation and role in peacemaking, as called for in Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000).

Today in Nigeria, our sisters, daughters and communities experience many challenges and insecurities including violations of our rights, as well as marginalization and discrimination. Gender inequality and violence against women continues unabated and is characterized by the lack of justice and normalization of inequality across the country. Nigeria is a signatory to international and regional instruments including Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The CEDAW committee has observed the lack of active prevention of violence against women. WILPF expresses our disapproval of this lack of action, a contributor to the perpetuation of violence against women, and its impact on women and society. In order to prevent further deterioration of women's rights, we must unite to tackle the root causes of violence. We must redefine our perception of what security means to us and use it as a framework for addressing inequality.

Small arms proliferation and trade has contributed to the continuation of violence in our homes and on the street. There must be comprehensive disarmament strategies in Nigeria to take guns and weapons off the street and out of our homes. Gun collection and destruction programmes should be organized, preferably in partnership with neighbouring countries. Furthermore, it is necessary to implement comprehensive measures to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition and to regulate the legal trade in these weapons. Arms transferred without regulations continue to kill and maim civilians, especially women. An international Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is currently being negotiated, and we believe that this treaty should be used not merely as a procedural authorization of arms transfers, but as a mechanism to aide the prevention of armed conflict, violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, and to significantly reduce the culture and economy of militarism.

In 2010, Nigeria spent US \$1,724million on its military and weapons (SIPRI, 2011) a sum larger than that reserved for funding development and equality. Education, health care, employment, and ending discrimination are fundamental to addressing violence.

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Priorities must be shifted if we wish to achieve sustainable development, gender equality, and real security.

Women are underrepresented in the political arena and there has been an overall regression in

women's representation in political decision-making positions with only approx. 3% of members of the House of Representatives are women despite efforts by WILPF and other organizations to increase this to 35%. Unless there is full participation of women in government, a fully stable and peaceful society will remain illusive.

WILPF calls on the government to commence consultations for the creation of a Nigerian National Action Plan (NAP) on Security Council Resolution 1325, an important tool in protecting women, ensuring their promotion, and their participation in peace building.

We stand together with women around the world to condemn the acts of violent terrorism with particular reference to the August 26, 2011 attack by Boko Haram on UN Headquarters in Abuja. Further, we condemn the communal, ethnic and religious violence in places like Jos, Borno, Kano, and Niger-Delta, which continues to adversely impact the lives of women and those around them. An example of this religious violence has been the influence of shari'a in Northern Nigeria, which has seen the further marginalization of women in the area.

It is our stated purpose to contribute to improving the status of women in all parts of Nigeria and to enhancing their vital and meaningful participation in conflict resolution.

We, the women of the Nigerian WILPF section and WILPF sections around the world, call on all actors, particularly the Nigeria authorities, local and national, to address inequality and the root causes of violence against women.

We further call for:

- More proactive action in the internalization and implementation of CEDAW;
- The creation and implementation of a National Action Plan (NAP) on Security Council Resolution 1325 in line with WILPF International Resolution;
- Increased partnership and consultation between Nigerian Government and civil society as a means to achieve these goals;
- Reduction of militarism and military spending and implementation of strategies for real disarmament;
- An ATT that includes comprehensive prohibitions on the transfer of arms that are, among other things, likely to be used to violate international humanitarian law or human rights or to commit acts of genocide or crimes against humanity; that will have a negative impact on sustainable socioeconomic development or destroy the environment; that will provoke or exacerbate armed conflict or facilitate sexual- and gender-based violence; and
- Increased support for the participation of women at all levels of decision-making including the elected roles.