



### **WILPF Africa unified Statement**

The statement below was agreed upon by women peace activists, members of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), in 18 countries in the African region, during WILPF Africa's (virtual) regional conference on November 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> 2020.

#### **United in our efforts – 20 years of UNSCR 1325**

20 years after the historic adoption of the UNSCR 1325, we celebrate the tremendous work carried out by women across the globe to advance women's rights and women's participation in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and political processes, and to demand and enhance security for women. We celebrate the steps taken and the progress made. We reflect upon the challenges posed by patriarchal structures, gender inequalities, power relations, militarized security, and lack of political will, continuously hindering the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda. United in our efforts, WILPF women's rights, and peace activists are determined to continue the hard work and collaboration across the African region, to mobilize women, call upon stakeholders, and influence the political will towards the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the broader WPS agenda.

- We call on governments, institutions, and multilateral fora to promote the participation of women in national, sub-regional, and international structures of decision-making, peacekeeping, and conflict prevention, as well as in defence and security structures.
- We urge governments to accelerate the domestication and effective and efficient implementation of UNSCR 1325, including its incorporation into Local Development Plans. As well as greater popularization of UNSCR 1325, through translation to local and national languages, training, and awareness-raising.
- We call on governments to adopt UNSCR 1325 National Action Plans (NAP), and/or to accelerate and communicate national strategies for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 NAPs.
- We ask governments, international partners, the African Union as well as agencies of the United Nations System, to facilitate, support, and strengthen women's organisations working on the WPS agenda, through increased communication, enabled synergies and allocation and facilitation of funding.

#### **The Impact of COVID-19 and the application of the Leave No One Behind principle**

Most countries in Africa have, since the beginning of March 2020, been confronted with the COVID-19 pandemic. This global pandemic is a health crisis, as well as a socio-

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economic, and food and security crisis, with significant repercussions for nearly all people within societies. However, several assessments of the effects of this crisis reveal that there are strong disparities in the effects, particularly with regards to gender, state of health, situations of distress and vulnerability, sector of activity, civil and migratory status, age or socioeconomic status.

The pandemic has further brought to light underlying structural injustices and challenges to sustainable peace and security. We are severely concerned with women's increased exposure to violence, challenges to women's economic and political empowerment, and the shrinking democratic space for civil society in particular women's rights activists. As WILPF activists, we will provide analysis, speak up, and forge change in the direction of feminist peace. In view of the above and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which aim to leave no one behind (LNOB):

- We urge the international community and the United Nations to give priority to human security, by reallocating military spending to humanitarian causes, mobilizing substantial resources to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on human rights and human security.
- We urge governments to include women and gender analysis in decision and policy making in planning and management of crises, such as health emergencies, natural disasters, and conflict.
- We call on states and the international community to ensure in-depth analysis of those left behind, and to integrate the LNOB approach into all development processes, with analysis, implementation, monitoring, accountability, and effective participation in the LNOB principle.
- We urge governments to have a more equitable distribution of support and financing to populations in vulnerable settings, to reduce disparities and disproportionate effects of the pandemic, and to promote economic empowerment of women to face COVID-19 challenges, with specific regards to those excluded from civil registration and to women in the informal sector.
- We urge governments to commit to placing higher importance on the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, to foster feminist domestic and foreign policies, and provide protection and support to women in conflicts and fragile settings.

## **Confronting militarized masculinities and strengthening disarmament**

We recognize the links between toxic masculinity norms, militarization, violence, and gender-based violence, proliferation and use of arms, and conflict. Harmful gender norms must be challenged and transformed, through community education, peace education and peace culture, demilitarized policing, and arms control. The culture of war continues to spur the production and development of arms, with the unrelenting

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development of lethal autonomous weapons systems, known as Killer Robots. WILPF Africa is determined in the struggle to transform militarized masculinities, prevent new forms of violence, counteract arms proliferation, and ban weapons systems such as Killer Robots.

- We call on the governments of African countries to resort, without delay, to mediation and dialogue as means of conflict resolution, to the detriment of military responses, which, beyond the exacerbation of violence, reinforce the culture of militarized masculinity.
- We urge the African Union, as a priority on the agenda of the next summit of heads of state, to encourage governments to prevent armed violence in all its forms, in particular by recommending the implementation of existing legal instruments to counteract the proliferation of SALW, and a commitment to ban lethal autonomous weapon systems.
- We call on governments to challenge the power balance between men and women, to actively engage in transforming negative masculinities, specifically urging men and boys to end gender inequality, gender-based violence, and rigid ideas and practices of the socialization of masculinity, key factors in the production of violence and recruitment into armed groups.
- We urge governments and their partners to establish programs and policies of alliances that strengthen the mobilization of men with women for feminist peace.
- We welcome the ownership of civil society in issues related to confronting militarized masculinities, the enhancement of women groups to advocate for women's human rights, and the support for feminist movements to grow.

### **Respect for public freedoms**

We are witnessing people coming together in various parts of the world, exercising their fundamental right to make their voices heard and protest against structural injustices, racism, police and/or military violence, limitations to women's rights, neglect of human rights, and a shrinking democratic space. We are witnessing violence, captivity, and ridicule in responses to peaceful protests. Across the African continent, people are coming together, standing up for their fundamental human rights. As women rights and peace activists, WILPF Africa condemns violence and oppression and encourage dialogue, mediation, demilitarized solutions, feminist approaches, and respect for human rights.

- We call for all to respect the freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and peaceful protests, and we urge governments to respect and promote fundamental and public rights and freedoms, in accordance with constitutions and other national, regional and international legal texts and instruments.

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- We urge governments to raise awareness and update training programs for law enforcement officers and administrative authorities on the exercise of fundamental freedoms enshrined in our laws and international conventions, to protect rights stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- We call on governments to revise legal frameworks that hinder democratic expression, such as anti-terrorism laws that may undermine the freedoms of demonstrations and assembly.
- We urge governments to prevent violence of all kinds linked to the deprivation of public freedoms.

## **WILPF Sections and Groups standing behind the statement**

WILPF Burundi	WILPF DRC	WILPF Sudan
WILPF Burkina Faso	WILPF Ghana	WILPF Togo
WILPF Cameroon	WILPF Kenya	WILPF Niger
WILPF CAR	WILPF Senegal	WILPF Nigeria
WILPF Chad	WILPF Sierra Leone	WILPF Uganda
WILPF Cote d'Ivoire	WILPF South Africa	WILPF Zimbabwe

## **Background**

For over 105 years, the Women's International League for peace and Freedom (WILPF) has been bringing women together to work for a world free from violence and armed conflict. National WILPF sections and groups in almost fifty countries across the globe work every day to educate, inform and advocate for sustainable peace-building by increasing women's meaningful participation, respect for human rights and intensifying disarmament and arms control efforts.

## **Contact**

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