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Statement submitted by Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

To achieve transformative, sustainable development and peace, action for women's economic empowerment must include women across the conflict spectrum and address root causes of inequality and violence.

The time is now to put people over profit and those marginalised at the mainstream; to create political economies of feminist peace based on gender justice and fulfilment of women's social, economic, and political human rights, rather than maintain outmoded political economies of militarism, exploitation, violence, and war against both people and planet.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom calls for an action agenda for a political economy of feminist peace rather than the current political economy of gendered exploitation, violence and war. We reject the idea that there is no money for peace and gender justice. We call for action to overthrow patriarchal assumptions that devalue and obscure the care economy while inflating and prioritizing the war economy. We commit to working with partners and allies to stigmatize war, heroise gender justice, and transform structures of violent masculinity and socio-economic inequality that instigate gendered insecurity, poverty, political exclusion, and violence.

The problem of women's economic empowerment cannot be seen in a vacuum. It is not an individual issue that individual women must solve. Instead, women's disempowerment is supported by economic, social, cultural, and political structures caused by political choices taken without our consent. This results in poor and unfair choices in using the money we have, and promotes disempowerment, exclusion, and violence.

In 2015, there was a \$1.6 trillion global arms trade. Yet only 2% of aid on peace and security to conflict affected states in 2012-2013 targeted gender equality. In 2010, the income of the global feminist movement (\$106 million for 740 women's organizations) was less than the cost of a single F-35 Fighter plane (\$137 million). The failure to control the use and export of arms is fuelling some of the worst conflicts where women suffer gravely and disproportionately including from sexual and gender based violence.

Women's rights are human rights, and states have an obligation to uphold them. Researchers now know that gender equality is the number one predictor of peace and that feminist movement building is the number one predictor of policies on reducing violence against women. Yet we still have not moved from commitments to accomplishments in preventing conflict, and promoting gender equality, women's economic empowerment and peace.

Women's economic empowerment faces huge obstacles in contexts wracked by conflict and war. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, women have demanded accountability for transnational corporations, whose militarised supply chains support economic, sexual and gender-based violence. In Colombia, women have built gender equality into peace agreements and continue to promote dialogue despite personal threats and a risks of re-emerging conflict. In Syria and Iraq, raging conflict and proliferation of arms mean women have lost hard-earned social, political and economic rights acquired over decades of struggle and activism. The

atrocities committed in conflict — including through use of explosive weapons in highly populated areas, targeting of medical and educational institutes, and use of besiegement as a weapon of war — are impacting women gravely and disproportionately. This impact includes both personal security and also livelihoods and capacity to access economic resources, which are essential for women to build peace in their communities.

Promoting women's sustainable economic empowerment requires turning the current political economy of violence and war on its head to create political economies of feminist peace. In Nigeria, women are mobilising to recognise gender violence as a conflict early warning indicator and preventing and addressing electoral violence through the pioneering Women's Situation Room. In Cameroon, women are changing cultural narratives of victimhood and silence toward narratives of presence, power, and peace. In Bosnia, activists have highlighted how because peace agreements can freeze power dynamics, transition periods can either institutionalise inequality and eventual conflict, or equality and long-term peace. A political economy of feminist peace requires rebuilding post-conflict societies in a way that trades men's economic dominance for economic fair play; privatised social services for effectively financed social institutions; bloated military budgets for investments in gender equitable and resilient communities; emaciated humanitarian action for adequately sourced humanitarian relief; and patriarchal dominance for institutionalised gender equality at every level.

Women's economic empowerment is an important part of a political economy for feminist peace. Yet much more is needed to create transformative change for women's political and socio-economic human rights, peace and gender justice. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom affirms that change can happen by altering underlying structures of socioeconomic inequality that are inextricably linked to an exploitative, militarised, and patriarchal status quo. Transformative change requires cultivating flourishing and resilient communities aimed at gendered inclusion and justice. Ensuring women's meaningful participation in both macro and micro-level economic decision-making and positioning feminist policy analysts in key positions of impact are crucial for this transformative change.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom calls for effective action to #MoveTheMoney from a political economy of war to a political economy of peace and gender justice:

1. United Nations Security Council: The Security Council must uphold its obligation to promote peace and security by reducing their military expenditures, which directly contribute to sexual and gender based violence and conflict, and redirecting these resources to gender equitable social development consistent with the Beijing Platform for Action Area E, Agenda 21, and Article 26 of the United Nations Charter.
2. Member States: United Nations Member States must uphold their obligations to respect, protect, and fulfil women's equal human rights, progressively and with maximum available resources including by: financing United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, National Action Plans and Regional Action Plans instituting Gender Budgeting and gendered aid on peace and security; and enhancing accountability for defence and security budgets (including through

regulation of arms transfers to address sexual and gender based violence) to free up resources for gender equality and increase democratic inclusion, transparency, and anti-corruption for peace all action must implement commitments on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women, 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and Monterrey Consensus.

3. United Nations and International Financial Institutions: The United Nations must integrate meaningful gender budgeting across all entities as a matter of priority; International Financial Institutions must build on existing efforts to integrate a holistic gender and conflict lens which recognises gender equality considerations in human rights, good governance, and capacity-building agendas for structurally transformative agendas such as advocated for by the Addis Ababa Action Plan on Transformative Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment; they must strengthen and finance domestic, international, and enabling environment policy actions and resources for gender equality and women's rights with particular emphasis for conflict affected states.

4. Civil Society: Civil society is a prime driver for a feminist and women's human rights agenda yet faces shrinking spaces and reduced funding for political action. The donor community must strengthen financial and other support to build the feminist movement including through dedicated, long-term, core funding for political work that continues to raise the bar for transformative change consistent calls for civil society support by the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action, Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women, Human Rights Council (22/6 on Protecting Human Rights Defenders), and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

Conclusion

The time is now to move the money from a political economy of exploitation and war to a political economy of peace and gender justice.

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom reaffirms our commitment to peace and freedom through demilitarisation, disarmament, and women's full and equal participation and rights. We ask governments to stop spending trillions on war and pennies on peace. We invite you to ask the world's militaries to have a bake sale, and redirect that budget for a few F-35 airplanes toward gender equality and feminist movement building. It would not be enough, but it would be a symbolic first step.

You get what you pay for: together, we can trade our war economy for a political economy of feminist peace. Only by addressing root causes of inequality and violence can we fully realise women's economic empowerment and rights. Join us in taking action to #MoveTheMoney for gender justice and peace.