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PANEL DISCUSSION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE RIGHT TO HEALTH

March 3, 2016

United Nations Human Rights Council 31st Session

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) welcomes this panel discussion, and would like to share our views about how an integrated approach to environment, security, and development is critical to effective action on climate change and the right to health.

Militarism is a cancer that must be addressed for effective climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, including around action on health issues. The systems of environmental exploitation that undergird climate change are part and parcel of a broader political

economy of gendered violence and war. The patriarchal economic system allows for the overall pollution and destruction of the earth and the oppression of people by treating women, animals and nature as objects to be owned, colonised, consumed and forced to yield and to reproduce.

Responding to and preventing further climate change requires transforming this economy of exploitation and violence into an economy of gender, justice and peace. This means not just strengthening efficiencies while continuing cancerous growth, but instead reducing consumption and stabilising growth, within planetary boundaries. It means holding global militarism accountable as the world's largest fossil fuel consumer. It means providing reparations and preventing further production and use of weapons, which poison or block access to land and water. It means addressing the impact of military activities on destruction of land and resources. It means taking coordinated action to address both gender and climate change as risk multipliers by building the resilience of people and planet for climate justice and peace.

This requires putting the most marginalised communities at the mainstream. The 2012 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) recognised that “Women are disproportionately affected by climate change impacts, such as droughts, floods and other extreme weather events, but they also have a critical role in combating climate change.” Women must be recognised as both human rights holders and also core stakeholders in building community resilience. The community care work of women and other marginalised groups must be recognised, whether feeding, nursing, teaching, or nurturing children, the disabled, or the disenfranchised. Climate action must ensure the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and gender responsive strategies including around sexual orientation and gender identity, including in disaster risk reduction efforts, and integrate gender into any security sector engagement to guard against sexual and gender based violence and abuse. This is especially critical for addressing areas at the nexus of conflict and climate change, such as in Syria, Darfur, Tunisia, and Egypt.

With the adoption of the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals and the 2015 Paris COP 21 conference on climate change, governments and civil society around the globe have the opportunity to significantly alter our excessively militarised, over-consuming, socially and economically inequitable world to one that promotes just and fair economic policy, sustainable, environmentally-friendly energy, and nonviolent settlement of conflicts. The 2015 COP 21 Paris agreement acknowledged that “Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity.”

Recommendations

WILPF would like to make the following recommendations to Member States:

- Ensure action taken on climate change supports human rights and humanitarian obligations including CEDAW, as well as the UNFCCC; and create integrated approaches to mitigation and adaptation that build resilience while being human rights-based, gender and socially just, and coherent with ecological sustainability, biodiversity, conservation and restoration as well as food sovereignty and security.
- Ensure action taken on climate change integrates a gender perspective and address the right to health, including providing durable solutions and comprehensive services to ensure sexual and reproductive health and rights, and gender responsive approaches to sexual orientation and gender identity issue for climate change refugees. Strengthen accountability for women's human rights by addressing human rights and gender equality issues in terms of climate change, including for militaries and private military companies, and conduct relevant assessment reports using gender disaggregated data.
- Ensure substantive participation of women-led civil society in developing policies and programmes around climate change that address the lived experiences of marginalised groups, and integrate gender analysis and action that upholds state obligation to respect, protect, and fulfil women's equal human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Strengthen human rights accountability for transnational corporations and other business enterprises including by exploring a treaty addressing TNCS, which affirms their human rights obligations and addresses crimes involving extractive use and exploitation of natural resources.

Panel Discussion Questions

In terms of rural and indigenous women, what are some of the steps that can be taken on a human rights front to improve women's access to safe and affordable healthcare facilities?

Also, what mechanisms can be developed or strengthened to ensure women's substantive participation in local, national, and international policymaking around the effects of climate change?

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14 THE 60TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
([HTTP://WILPF.ORG/?POST_TYPE=WILPF_EVENTS&P=17846](http://WILPF.ORG/?POST_TYPE=WILPF_EVENTS&P=17846))

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15 PARTICIPATORY DISCUSSION: IMPLEMENTING THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY
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March 3, 2016

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March 2, 2016

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March 4, 2016

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