

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



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Statement on meaningful participation

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What can we do to ensure meaningful participation of civil society to realise the transformative goals of the 2030 Agenda?

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have created the opportunity for transformative action to “leave no one behind”¹. However, they risk watering this idea down if implementation processes do not embody principles that are centred toward people and planet.

Today we face a crisis of meaningful participation, as we can see by looking at the issue of gender equality and women’s rights worldwide: Today there are only about 23 per cent of women in national parliaments worldwide²; less than half of governments have adopted gender budgeting initiatives³; and only 2 per cent of aid on peace and security targets gender equality⁴. Meanwhile, one F-35 fighter jet costs about the same as the budget of the entire global women’s movement, and \$1.6 trillion arms trade would be a substantial contribution to the SDGs⁵. In the UNECE region, there are 20 per cent of the world population but almost 60 per cent of global military expenditure⁶, a number about 10 times higher than the money they invest in development aid, and hugely bloated in comparison to the undervalued care economy.

What can we do to ensure civil society’s meaningful participation for implementation of the 2030 agenda for transformative impact?

First, we must recognise that meaningful participation requires more than access. Instead, it requires a power shift to re-centre work on equality, development, security and peace around the voices and rights of women and those most marginalised. Consistent with the Aarhus

¹ United Nations [UN]. (2016). The 2016 Sustainable Development Goals Report. Retrieved from <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2016/leaving-no-one-behind>.

² Inter-Parliamentary Union [IIPU]. (2017). Women in National Parliaments. Retrieved from <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>.

³ UN Women (2017). Planning and Budgeting. Retrieved from <http://gender-financing.unwomen.org/en/areas-of-work/planning-and-budgeting>.

⁴ Coomaraswamy, R. (2015). Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing the peace: A guide study on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. *UN Women*. Retrieved from <http://wps.unwomen.org/~media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf>

⁵ Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom [WILPF]. (2016). Women, Peace and Security Financing. Retrieved from <http://www.peacewomen.org/WPS-Financing>.

⁶ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute [SIPRI]. (2017). SIPRI Military Expenditure Database. Retrieved from <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>.

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Convention and Rio Principle 10⁷, meaningful participation requires that local people, including women, speak for themselves (rather than being spoken for) in a way that: addresses root causes of violence, for justice and human rights, including women's rights, with impact.

Recognising this, it is critical for civil society to ensure a civil society engagement mechanism that allows civil society not only thin participation or access, but meaningful participation with on-going core support that enables diverse inclusion, and effective human rights impact.

⁷ The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe [UNECE]. (2017). Political Participation. Retrieved from <https://www.unece.org/env/pp/welcome.html>.