

**“Make it Binding: Include Gender-Based Violence in the Arms Trade Treaty”**

**Joint Oral Statement for the 57th United Nations Commission on the Status of Women on  
Elimination and Prevention of all Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls**

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*Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom and Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur  
Passionists International; Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA); The International Peace  
Bureau; Center for Women’s Global Leadership; International Association of Lawyers; Against  
Nuclear Arms; Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries; Edmund Rice International; Global Justice  
Center; VIVAT International; Loretto Community; World Young Women’s Christian Association;  
Femmes Africa Solidarité and International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW).*

Militarization and the arms trade contribute to the legitimization and continuation of gender inequalities, discrimination and violence against women. Emboldened by weapons, power and status, many State and non-State actors perpetrate gender-based violence with impunity. In addition to perpetuating violence, weapons are used as a source of intimidation to women’s active participation in social and political life. In conflict, parties use sexual and gender-based violence as a weapon of war, and these crimes have been greatly intensified by the proliferation and availability of small arms and light weapons. For example, in my country, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), multiple actors including state security forces and armed rebel groups perpetrate armed gender-based violence with impunity. Unfortunately the lethal and negative consequences of arms are not isolated to conflict zones. Guns, or the presence or threat of guns, are often used to facilitate violence in our homes and communities all over the world.

After the conclusion of this year’s CSW, a second negotiating conference for an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) will take place here at UN Headquarters. The ATT could, if strengthened, reduce gender-based violence, save lives and protect our rights.

We have six key recommendations today.

We call on Member States to *negotiate and agree on a strong Arms Trade Treaty that includes legally-binding gender provisions*. There must be an obligation in the criteria section of the Treaty requiring States to deny an international transfer of conventional arms where there is a substantial risk that the arms under consideration are likely to be used to perpetrate or facilitate acts of gender-based violence, including rape and other forms of sexual violence. In short, the current draft Treaty text must be strengthened. The reference to gender-based violence must be moved into article 4(2) along with IHL and HR law. It must be subject to transfer prohibitions, not voluntary risk mitigation measures.

- Secondly, we demand States to *reflect the gendered reality and the gendered impacts of arms in the work and outcome document of the 57th Commission on the Status of Women*.
- Thirdly, we call for a *reduction in military spending* and expenditure on weapons, to shift resources to equality, development and environmental sustainability. Our work as civil society, as women's groups, must be better resourced now not tomorrow.
- Fourthly, States must support the prevention of violence against women with actions and *stop the selling of arms* that inherently violate human rights.
- Fifth, to improve how the international system functions, *there must be implementation and integration of Human Rights, Women Peace and Security, and Disarmament* frameworks and mechanisms.
- Finally, women must have space at all tables and forums. States and the United Nations must *ensure and support women's full and equal participation* in all peace negotiations and processes and in the development of international instruments such as the Arms Trade Treaty.

It is time to address the linkages between arms and violence against women. We believe that all States represented here today have an opportunity to do this in the upcoming Arms Trade Treaty negotiations. We call on you to take this opportunity.

Thank you.