

We, the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) at Rutgers University and women's and human rights organizations dedicated to gender equity and the elimination of gender-based violence, welcome the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and States' consideration of the priority theme on the "elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls."

Since 1991, CWGL's international 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence campaign, has mobilized thousands of activists and organizations worldwide to increase awareness of gender-based violence and call governments to respond, protect, and prevent such violence. Women's security and well-being are compromised by both the threat and experience of violence, particularly in conflict and post-conflict situations. Over the last three years the 16 Days Campaign has worked to highlight linkages between gender-based violence and militarism, including: (i) political violence against women; (ii) the proliferation of small arms and their role in domestic violence; (iii) sexual violence during and post-conflict; and (iv) the role of state actors as perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence.

As set out in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action in 1993, Member States asserted that "gender-based violence and all forms of sexual harassment and exploitation...are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person, and must be eliminated" (paragraph 18). Since that time, States have reaffirmed their commitment to ending violence against women through the adoption of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the agreed conclusions of the 42nd and 51st sessions of the CSW, and Security Council resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, and 1960.

Despite these commitments, violence against women persists as a widespread and pervasive human rights violation. States have clear and concrete obligations to prevent such violence, prosecute and punish perpetrators, and provide regress and relief to victims and survivors of violence. We, the members of civil society organizations worldwide, call on Member States to:

- (a) Pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating violence against women, strengthening the rule of law and the capacities of civilian and military justice systems to address gender-based violence,;
- (b) Recognize that a culture of militarism promotes and reinforces a culture of violence and take necessary measures to facilitate disarmament and promote peace, including through ratification and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty;
- (c) Invest in those programs and projects that promote human security; and
- (d) Respect, protect, promote and fulfill all human rights and take urgent and concrete measures to secure gender equality.

We call on the CSW to facilitate leadership to support States in fulfilling their human rights obligations. We remain committed to working with women's organizations and the United Nations in building a more peaceful world.

Signatories:

Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers University