



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR
PEACE & FREEDOM

WILPF POSITION
Geneva, Switzerland
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2016

We want a United Nations Secretary-General who is a progressive feminist leader and delivers a feminist agenda for peace, global diplomacy and conflict prevention

The leader of the United Nations must be the embodiment of “We the People”. The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) campaigned for the formation, the strengthening and reform of the United Nations because of our belief in non-violence, disarmament, equality, dialogue and the principles of the UN Charter.

WILPF advocates for the next Secretary-General (to take office in January 2017) to be a progressive feminist leader who delivers a feminist agenda for peace, global diplomacy and conflict prevention.

After eight male Secretaries-General, it is time for a woman to hold the position of Secretary-General. Advocating for a Secretary-General to lead a feminist agenda is not the same as advocating for a woman as Secretary-General. We do demand both. It is time.

The United Nations remains a patriarchal bureaucracy illustrated by who is in leadership posts. In 2015, over 80% of the top leadership posts (Under Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General positions) went to men. The numbers and the culture must be transformed from the top and the bottom. The Secretary-General must be willing and capable of challenging these patriarchal structures and power. This also means demilitarising and decorporatising the UN! This also means ending immunity for violations and complicity in crimes committed by UN personnel! This means protecting “the people” and the earth before geo-politics! This means investing in conflict prevention and resolution instead of its perpetuation through war profiteering!

WILPF members came together in April 2015 at our 100th anniversary declaring, “Now more than ever a functional multilateral mechanism is needed to guarantee the best aspects of the nation state system, and eliminate its lethal tendencies.” The WILPF Manifesto goes on to highlight that “although the UN's many agencies and projects provide valuable services,



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its founding principles are being betrayed by the practices of governments. The five permanent member states of the Security Council, the principal victor nations of World War II, have a power of veto that they use to further their geopolitical and strategic agendas in direct contradiction of the UN's Charter. The Security Council is failing in its task, under Article 26, of securing world disarmament [...] Thus the essence of the Charter, which lies in observing the wellbeing of all the human family, as opposed to the interests of powerful nations, is perverted.”

Women's and civil society movements have been clear that there should be “nothing about us without us.” The Secretary-General must secure and expand the space for civil society in and around the UN. Civil society faces threats, backlash and closing space at local, national and international levels. WILPF stands with civil society calling for genuine access, meaningful participation, transparency and accountability. The process to recruit the Secretary-General reflects the unaccountable power of the P5 and the Security Council, which must be reformed fundamentally. We support the demands for further reforms in this process and many others across the system.

The Secretary-General must help facilitate cultures of peace, non-violence and freedom. She must implement a feminist agenda to return the United Nations to being a guarantor of the principles of the Charter.

*Consultative Status with UN ECOSOC, UNCTAD and UNESCO.
Special Consultative Relations with FAO, ILO and UNICEF.*