



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR
PEACE & FREEDOM

**Statement to the Third Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty
Geneva, Switzerland, 12 September 2017**

Yemen. Syria. Iraq. South Sudan. Ukraine. One only needs to look at news reports on these countries to understand that civilians are dying and cities are being destroyed.

The statistics of the dead and the displaced, however, do not account for the personal horror experienced by each individual trapped in these war zones, watching their loved ones and their cities die.

The statistics also do not necessarily account for the experiences of women or girls during and after armed conflict, which usually include vastly increased rates of sexual violence, trafficking, forced marriage, abuse, and harassment.

Many—and sometimes most—of the weapons being used in these conflicts have been made and sold by ATT states parties and signatories. In particular, the United Kingdom, France, and the United States are making billions of dollars off of the total destruction of Yemen.

Yesterday, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) warned states parties against treating weapons like any other commercial good. Yet the level of war profiteering still going on three years after the Treaty's entry into force suggest that some countries do believe that profits from weapons sales should override the human suffering they inflict around the world.

The President of this meeting has asked that we focus on the things that unite us rather than divide us. We are not here to call out Treaty violations in order to divide the conference. Should we not all be united behind making sure this Treaty achieves its objectives—key amongst which is to reduce human suffering? Should we not all be united to make sure that the gap between the law and respect for the law that the ICRC described is eliminated? Should we not all be united to ensure that human rights are protected over profit margins?

Right now in London, the UK government is hosting the world's largest arms fair. The weapons on display there today will be used in conflicts tomorrow. Activists have blockaded the fair and been arrested for their efforts on behalf of humanity. The least we can do in this room is signal that the international community is taking implementation of this treaty seriously.

States parties must get serious about following the rules, and holding others to account for breaking them. We welcome statements from states or groups of states to cease arms transfers to particular zones of conflict. The statement Mexico read out yesterday should be matched by those appealing to states against transferring weapons to Saudi Arabia and to South Sudan, for example.

We also welcome the Irish working paper on gender-based violence, and highlight our own resources on this issue. In particular, WILPF has produced a briefing paper for this conference, based on earlier research, that provides clear guidance to states about how to assess an arms transfer for the risk of GBV. We encourage states parties to discuss and implement the recommendations contained in these papers.

We also encourage states parties to discuss how the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, which is resulting in human rights and humanitarian law violations in many countries, can be addressed in ATT risk assessment processes.

There needs to be better integration between the ATT and the UN's human rights and disarmament mechanisms and processes. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs yesterday highlighted the UN Secretary-General's vision of disarmament that saves lives. The ATT could, and should, be an integral part of that vision, but much more serious implementation work is needed to reach that goal.