



## **Towards a Peaceful Europe in a Peaceful World**

Brussels, 14 April 2019

Dear candidate to the European Parliamentary elections,

The stated goals of the European Union are to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its people. We, as members of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in Europe, expect from the candidates for the European Parliament to uphold these goals.

WILPF works for sustainable peace grounded in equality, justice, and demilitarised security. Throughout our long history, we have consistently drawn attention to the links between systems of injustice, inequality, racism, militarism, and patriarchy as fuelling global and individual insecurity. The 19<sup>th</sup> century empires have largely disintegrated, but economic, military and cultural domination of some countries by others perpetuates colonial conditions.

We have continuously raised our voices against militarism that is damaging our societies, violating rights, irreversibly destroying our environment, and diverting money from social welfare. The current neoliberal policies impoverish, alienate and disempower people around the world. This disproportionately affects women.

Since the last European Parliamentary elections, we have been experiencing a backlash against democracy. This shift has been marked by closed borders, the normalisation of discrimination, stigmatisation, fear and hate. The public debate is increasingly polarised, and racist rhetoric, dehumanising of refugees and disinformation is spread. Nationalism is once again growing.

We are also seeing an increasing militarisation of the European Union. The Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the European Defence Fund (EDF) are two examples of how the EU is expanding its common military capacity through research and development of new weapons systems. This is diverting resources from healthcare, education, pensions, and social welfare. Women are disproportionately affected by cuts in the public sector, both as employees and as those that will take on the burden of unpaid care work.

The current militarisation of the EU is in direct opposition to the goal of a peaceful and democratic Europe. The latter must be the highest priority of the EU and of the politicians that represent us in the European Parliament.

We expect the elected candidates to:

- Initiate and support measures to reshape the EU foreign policy that engages with other countries on a platform based on solidarity, equality and justice;
- Stop the militarisation of the EU borders and ensure safe, humane and dignified pathways into Europe;
- Stop the development, production and transfer of arms, and ban lethal autonomous weapon systems in line with the European Parliament resolution 2018/2752(RSP);

- Rally support for and push member states to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW);
- Promote women's rights globally by making gender equality the guiding principle of all EU external relations;
- Ensure gender equal representation in all levels of decision-making and facilitate women's political agency;
- Fulfil EU's commitments to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) both in its internal and external policies;
- Adopt economic policies and use gender budgeting that recognise and valorise women's participation in the economy, and ensure equal access and ownership over resources and power.

Yours, in respect and solidarity,

Handwritten signatures of Heidi Meinzolt and Lina Hjartström in cursive script.

Heidi Meinzolt and Lina Hjartström

Members of the International Board, Representatives for the European region

**For more information, please contact:**

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