

16-06-2025

Dear Excellencies,

As you prepare to meet in The Hague this June as NATO leaders, the world is facing multiple, interconnected global crises, including rising geopolitical polarization, severe cuts to international aid, accelerating climate disasters, protracted conflicts and displacement, economic instability, deepening inequalities and the rise of anti-rights actors. Women and marginalized groups are disproportionately affected by this. These threats not only call for deeper international cooperation but especially for investment in the people, communities and civil society working for peace, conflict prevention, human security and equality every day.

You are expected to discuss a historic increase in defense spending, which could result in a doubling or tripling of national defense budgets by 2032. Yet, many of you already struggle with spending your existing defense budgets and are dealing with fiscal constraints, increasing inequalities, economic decline, and pressing social needs.

History shows that rapid increases in military spending often come at the cost of social cohesion programs, domestically and abroad, which in effect prevent violence and conflict. This year alone, NATO members are expected to collectively cut at least 46 billion euro in official development assistance (ODA), funding that supports global health, education, economic equality, and conflict prevention. Funding for gender justice and women-led peacebuilding initiatives have been disproportionately affected. Yet these programs have consistently contributed to more inclusive peace and resilience by facilitating conflict resolution, empowering women and youth, protecting natural resources, and enabling communities to thrive. By cutting this budget suddenly and disproportionately, it will have severe humanitarian consequences particularly in the Global South. It affects in particular smaller civil society organizations and individuals that do life-saving work and build peace, during already challenging times where civic space is rapidly shrinking around the world.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the foundation of the Women, Peace & Security (WPS) agenda. This agreement recognizes that while women are disproportionately affected by conflict and structurally excluded from decision-making, they are also essential agents in preventing violence and building peace. You reaffirmed this commitment through the updated 2024 NATO WPS Policy, but effective implementation largely depends on the budget made available, prioritization of WPS in times of conflict escalations and strengthening the position of Gender Advisors and Gender Focal Points as well as investing in women human rights defenders.

As you consider this historic reallocation of national resources, we urge you to consider that increased militarization and a defense-only approach should never replace investing in gender justice, peacebuilding and humanitarian cooperation. We ask you to earmark a necessarily substantial proportion of defense and security spending to scale up the WPS agenda, as women's leadership in inclusive security realizes conflict prevention. These investments need to be aligned with the priorities and objectives of local women-led and women's rights organizations.

This means committing resources to support women's meaningful participation in peace processes, enhancing women's leadership in conflict prevention, ensuring accountability from gender-based violence and the protection of those at risk, and embedding gender-responsive approaches across all operations. A strategic investment in human security, including arms control, threat reduction, and inclusive societal resilience, offers a path to lasting peace at a fraction of the cost of continued weapons buildup. As civil society supporting millions worldwide, we call on you to match defense ambitions with principled leadership that prioritizes inclusive and sustainable peace. We ask for your commitment to:

- 1. Ensure that any increase in defense and security spending be assessed against its impact on human rights, international law and peacebuilding efforts globally and is fundamentally linked to the UN 1325 resolution.**
- 2. Maintain and strengthen support for civic space as a vital foundation for healthy democracies and the rule of law, which are founding values of NATO.**
- 3. Expand the implementation of the Women, Peace & Security agenda in line with NATO's 2024 WPS Policy, guaranteeing adequate and dedicated funding through both NATO's budgets and national allocations.**

Yours sincerely,

CSO's in NATO states:

Oxfam Novib (*The Netherlands*)

Transparency International (*Germany / EU level*)

The National Council of Women of Finland (*Finland*)

Plataforma Portuguesa das ONGD (*Portugal*)

Partos (*the Netherlands*)

Women's Lobby of Slovenia (*Slovenia*)

Center for Violence Prevention (*United States*)

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom UK (*United Kingdom*)

Cordaid (*The Netherlands*)

Forum For Youth Development (FOYODE) (*EU level*)

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (*EU level*)

Oxfam International (*United States*)

Operation 1325 (*Sweden*)

Shevolution (*United Kingdom*)

Women for Justice Foundation (*Canada*)

MenEngage Global Alliance (*United States*)

Women Now for Development (*France*)

CARE Nederland (*The Netherlands*)

Action de Protection Mère et Enfant Asbl (*France*)

Saferworld (*United Kingdom*)

Platform Vrouwen & Duurzame Vrede (*The Netherlands*)

Center for Equality Advancement (*Lithuania*)

The Association of Ukrainian Women in Belgium (*Belgium*)

Mothers for Peace (*United States*)

Oxfam Great Britain (*United Kingdom*)

Alliance for Peacebuilding (*United States*)

Oxfam Deutschland (*Germany*)

French Coordination for the European women's lobby (*France*)

Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) (*the Netherlands*)

Mensen met een Missie (*The Netherlands*)

International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (*United States*)

University of Canterbury (*United Kingdom*)

Oxfam Denmark (*Denmark*)

United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY) (*The Netherlands*)

Newcastle University (*United Kingdom*)

Association for Liberty and Equality of Gender - A.L.E.G. (*Romania*)

UN Women Iceland (*Iceland*)

PAX (*The Netherlands*)

Asociatia UNIC (*Romania*)

Mondiaal FNV (*The Netherlands*)

CARE Deutschland e.V. (*Germany*)

AWEN – Albanian Women Empowerment Network (*Albania*)

VENRO - Association of German Development and Humanitarian Aid NGOs (*Germany*)

Romanian Women's Lobby (*Romania*)

Community Safety and Mediation Center (*Romania*)

CNCD-11.11.11 (*Belgium*)

International Civil Society Action Network (*United States*)

The Association "Gender, Peace and Security", (*Albania*)

Finn Church Aid (*Finland*)

Peace and Freedom Organization (*Belgium*)

Minnesota Peace Project (*United States*)

Perkrahje per te rinjte (*Albania*)

Klubi Social (*Albania*)

CHOICE For Youth and Sexuality (*The Netherlands*)

International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) (*United States*)

Impunity Watch (*The Netherlands*)

American Friends Service Committee (*United States*)

CIVIC (*United States*)

FAIR.FI (*Finland*)

Väestöliitto (*Finland*)

Nederlands Juristen Comité voor de Mensenrechten (Dutch Section of the International Commission of Jurists) (*The Netherlands*)

Felm, Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (*Finland*)

Search for Common Ground (*United States*)

International Planned Parenthood Federation - European Network (IPPF EN) (*Belgium*)

Hands Across the Divide (*United Kingdom*)

WO=MEN, Dutch Gender Platform (*The Netherlands*)

Icelandic Women's Rights association (*Iceland*)

Women' International League For Peace And Freedoms (WILPF) (*United States*)

Westhoek Vredeshoek (*The Netherlands*)

CMI — Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation (*Finland*)

Peace Direct (*United Kingdom*)

Conducive Space for Peace (CSP) (*Denmark*)

Oxfam Italia (*Italy*)

Suomen Sadankomitea - Committee of 100 in Finland (*Finland*)

Oxfam Intermón (*Spain*)

Christian Aid (*United Kingdom*)

Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice (*The Netherlands*)

Observatoire pour la Défense des Droits des Personnes Handicapées (*Belgium*)

Together We Rise Foundation for Women and Child Care (TWRF) (*United States*)

World's Youth for Climate Justice (*The Netherlands*)

PartnersGlobal (*United States*)

Nederlandse Vereniging voor Vrouwenbelange, Vrouwenarbeid en Gelijk Staatsburgerschap (*The Netherlands*)

FiLiA (*United Kingdom*)

FoRS - Czech Forum for Development Cooperation (*Czech Republic*)

Human Security Collective (*The Netherlands*)

Young Leaders Entrepreneurs (*Belgium*)

Women's Council Denmark (*Denmark*)

FARAGEER (*Canada*)

SASH (*United States*)

Equipop (*France*)

Parliamentarians for Global Action (*United States*)

CSO's in non-NATO states

Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice

Mwaka Nawila Foundation

Living Peace Institute

Oxfam Ireland

Organisation for Relief & Betterment Initiating Trust (ORBIT)

Sudan Unlimited

Jahjaga Foundation

Cyprus Peace and Dialogue Center (CPDC)

Nonviolent Peaceforce

PeaceWomen Across the Globe

Center for Civil Society and Democracy

Wide Approach to Sustainable Livelihoods (WASL)

Women Education and Development Organisation of Liberia

Addu Women's Association

Women Relief Aid South Sudan

Reach Out Cameroon

Association of War Affected Women

Allamin Foundation for Peace and Development

WILPF Lebanon

Empatiku Foundation

Food4Humanity

aXXelerate

Mobaderoon

PAIMAN

Abductees Mothers Association

Zenobia Organization

Corporación CIASE

Wi'am