Why WILPF Has Worked Tirelessly Alongside Thousands of NGOs Over the Past Fifty
Years for a Comprehensive Test Ban, September 2003

A culture of peace is one of WILPF’s founding principles. The Women’s International League for
Peace and Freedom (WILPF) was founded in 1915 with the aim of abolishing war, the causes of
war, and to promote a culture of peace and non-violence. Since that time, the stakes of war have
risen dramatically; no people can leave in peace, free from the threat of war, so long as any
country holds the threat of nuclear annihilation as central to their narrow concept of national
security. How can there ever be a culture of peace when a few men have the power to destroy
millions of lives with a single weapon?

Marginalized people experience the nuclear age differently. Atomic testing has caused
immeasurable amounts of human suffering in the form of cancers, birth defects, social upheaval
and environmental destruction. These effects have been felt especially by indigenous peoples,
who have seen their lives and homelands sacrificed for the creation of these ecocidal, genocidal
and suicidal weapons. Like most aspects of a militarized society, women experience a nuclear
culture differently than men. Women give birth to boneless babies in the South Pacific, women
repeatedly miscarry in Utah, Nevada and Kazakhstan and women have been some of the
strongest, most vocal opponent of nuclear weapons since the idea was born in 1942.

WILPF believes that diplomacy and multilateralism is the only way to disarmament.
Through confidence-building measures, the strengthening of verification systems and regimes,
and strict adherence to international law, nuclear disarmament is possible. The past fifty years
has witnessed the birth of a variety of international disarmament machinery: the General
Assembly First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament, the Special Sessions on
Disarmament, and the Disarmament Commission to name a few. The quantity of international
disarmament bodies indicates the universal understanding that diplomacy is the only way to
international security.

The meeting here in Vienna is another critical chink in the international disarmament
regime. Non-proliferation across the globe will remain an impossible dream so long as the
current Nuclear Weapons States- and nuclear capable states- continue vertical proliferation.
Without committed, irreversible, and progressive disarmament, the proliferation genie will not
be kept in its bottle much longer.

WILPF believes in a truly comprehensive test ban, including the cessation of all types of
nuclear testing. It is somewhat disappointing that the CTBT does not expressly forbid qualitative
improvements to nuclear weapons arsenals through subcritical testing and experimentation.
While recognizing claims that these tests are a part of maintaining current stockpiles, even this
action is contrary to international norms and customary law. Ongoing subcritical testing
conducted by the US, UK, Russia and possibly China, violate the spirit of the CTBT. WILPF
calls upon these states to cease their subcritical testing practices immediately. A special emphasis
should be put on the UK and Russia, who have ratified the CTBT, yet undermine its efficacy by
continuing to conduct these tests.

WILPF calls on states party to the treaty to use their influence on states outside the treaty,
to sign and ratify the CTBT immediately. This idea has been suggested in the past, and should be
continued, with ongoing efforts monitored by the CTBTO Secretariat. WILPF will continue to
work with other NGOs to emphasize the necessity of immediate entry-into-force in order to
promote global security.