FEMINIST FRAMEWORK FOR THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S REPORT:

"OUR COMMON AGENDA"

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PREFACE

Maria Fernandes Espinosa | Soon-Young Yoon | Nudhara Yusuf

AUTHORS

Maria Fernandes Espinosa

President of the 73rd UN General Assembly/co-chair of the C4UN steering committee

Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa was President of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly and has more than 20 years of multilateral experience in international negotiations, peace, security, defense, disarmament, human rights, indigenous peoples, gender equality, sustainable development, environment, biodiversity, climate change and multilateral cooperation. She has served Ecuador as Minister of Foreign Affairs (twice), Minister of National Defense, and Coordinating Minister of Natural and Cultural Heritage. She is a member and the Executive Director of GWL Voices for Change and Inclusion.

Ms. Espinosa was Chair of the Group of 77 and China until January 2018, and also served as Chair of the Andean Community. At the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, she promoted the adoption of the resolution presented by Ecuador entitled "Indigenous women: key actors in poverty and hunger eradication". She was a chief negotiator at the sixteenth and seventeenth Conferences of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and at the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

In 2008, she was the first woman to become Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations in New York. She chaired the work of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in Geneva, and at the twenty-first Conference of the Parties (COP 21) on Climate Change in Paris.

Ms. Espinosa Garcés was Special Adviser to the President of the Constituent Assembly that drafted the Constitution of Ecuador in 2008 and Regional Director (South America) and Adviser on Biodiversity (Geneva) at the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Soon-Young Yoon

UN representative International
Alliance of Women

Soon-Young Yoon is Chair of the Board at the Women's Environment and Development Organization and author of "Citizen of the World: Soon-Young and the UN". In 2021, she was appointed to the Council on Gender Equality convened by H. E. Ambassador, Abdhulla Shahid, the President of the 76th UN General Assembly. During her past tenure as chair of the NGO CSW/NY, the committee launched the Cities for CEDAW campaign in the US. She was a Social Development officer for UNICEF in the Southeast Asia office as well as the Social Scientist at WHO/SEARO in New Delhi. She serves as a board member of the International Foundation for Ewha Womans University and on the Global Advisory Board of the Harvard AIDS Initiative. She is also a founding member of the Women Mayor's Network in association with the National Democratic Institute.

A former columnist for the EarthTimes newspaper, she is co-editor with Dr Jonathan Samet of the WHO monograph, "Gender, Women, and the Tobacco Epidemic." Yoon received her A.B. in French literature with honors, a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Michigan and has a certificate in computer graphics from the Pratt Institute of the Arts. She is married to Richard M. Smith, former Editor-in-Chief and President of Newsweek and current President of the Pinkerton Foundation.

Nudhara Yusuf

Global Governance Innovation Network
Facilitator, Stimson Center

Nudhara Yusuf is a Researcher with the Global Governance, Justice & Security Program where she coordinates the Global Governance Innovation Network (GGIN).

Prior to Stimson, Nudhara worked with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s SDG Integration Team and the UNDP Regional Bureau for the Asia Pacific's Strategic Foresight Unit. Previously, she worked on Education and Training with the World Federation of United Nations Associations and supported the British Shadow Secretary of State for Justice in the UK's Parliament. A Dean's List graduate of Philosophy, Politics, and Economics from University College London, Nudhara is the founder and trustee of several grassroots NGOs and CSOs across India and the UK. Her research primarily focuses on governance of and with future generations, the role of globalization and development in the shifting multilateral architecture, and engaging youth and civil society in governance and multilateral institutions.

In addition to her role at Stimson, Nudhara also serves as Coordinator of the Global Futures Forum, Global Youth Coordinator at the Coalition for the UN We Need (C4UN) and an honorary advisor to NGOCSD-NY.

PREFACE

Look at the world through women's eyes" … "All issues are women's issues" (slogans of the NGO Forum in Beijing 1995

When the UN Secretary-General's report, "Our Common Agenda" (OCA), was launched, it opened the door to reimagining the United Nations, among other ways, through a feminist lens. A feminist framework would inform the UN's vision for the future of global cooperation, reinvigorate multilateralism, and help renew a social contract in solidarity with young people, future generations, and those who have often been left on the margins of decision-making processes.

The OCA offers some concrete recommendations worth noting for follow up on priorities identified in the UN75 Political Declaration – such as "We will place women and girls at the center.". For example, commitment number five in the OCA urges member states to support:

- Repealing gender-discriminatory laws;
- Promoting gender parity, including through quotas and special measures;
- Facilitating women's economic inclusion, including investment in the care economy and support for women entrepreneurs, encompassing voices of younger women;
- and Establishing an emergency response plan to the eradication of violence against women and girls.

Although the report puts gender equality and women's empowerment at the center of the UN's three pillars of peace and security, human rights, and development, it does not fully address the all-important questions of "How?" and "By whom"? Neither does it elaborate on key mandates within the UN to build accountability and transparency mechanisms that can help assess current barriers to change and monitor progress on implementation.

The purpose of this collection of expert papers is to shine a light on a feminist analysis that contributes to the ongoing debates concerning the upcoming SDG Summit, the Summit of the Future in 2024, and other discussions such as the New Agenda for Peace and Global Digital Compact. The topics of the policy briefs range from climate change to women's health, feminist foreign policy, digital technology and decolonization, financing for development, youth and intergenerational leadership, and women, peace, and security. The breadth of topics was intentional, affirming the stance that, as stated by the NGO Forum in Beijing in 1995, "all Issues are women's issues." Just "look at the world through women's eyes".

Beyond proclaiming that women's issues do not fit in a siloed box -- nor are they issues to only be discussed once a year in March at CSW -- we find that a feminist lens on the Our Common Agenda adds value in three specific ways. First, it considers the cultural shifts necessary across multilateral systems to implement recommendations that continue to be put forward. Second, it mainstreams the voices at the margins, to move beyond consultation and centralize the voices of those who are often most effected by reform. Third, it mainstreams – – gender equity and co-leadership considerations across the multilateral system. This, we believe, is the added value the authors bought to the conversation surrounding the OCA and the preparations of a sequence of Summits, including Summit of the Future.

Some of the questions that authors addressed were:

- How can the feminist and women's movements influence decision-making across the UN system—on all issues such as financial architecture and climate justice--using an intergenerational approach?

- What is the current state of the art in the global multilateral agenda and how can we create synergies with women's human rights?

- What are the recommendations for action-oriented implementation and where do we start?

- What are the UN agreements with accountability mechanisms that we can use to guide action on the OCA such as the Beijing Platform for Action (CSW) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW committee).

- How can these be implemented along with the Sustainable Development Goals and other UN agreements related to climate change, financing for development, social development, local authorities, and generation equality?

These were common threads noted throughout the papers:

1. **A feminist framework calls for transformative and profound rethinking of our paradigms and values.** The experts in this volume criticize the "add gender and stir" approach currently prevalent in many domestic and foreign policies, peace and security, and development programs. Rather, the OCA must challenge the status quo

that is based on unequal power relations and siloed thinking. A transformative feminist framework should allow for better policies, legal frameworks, and cultural shifts to combat patriarchy and all forms of discrimination and violence against women.

For example, Aarathi Krishnan in her discussion of digital justice and youth leadership calls for revisioning a digital future based on new ethical codes. She says that current digital systems are not neutral, and that digital governance is narrowly contextual in historically dominant value systems of class, race, and colonialism. The Summit of the Future and Global Digital Compact should establish new value-bases as foundations for digital governance.

Similarly, Marissa Conway addresses the question: "Would the world be more peaceful if women were in charge?" She makes a useful distinction between short and long-terms goals, noting that women's equal leadership in foreign policy spaces is a starting point but that this does not guarantee peace. The long-term goal, for example, in a New Agenda for Peace must be to reform societal hierarchies and social norms that are based on dominant power structures.

2. **Peace and security for women should be reframed as "human security".** Domestic and foreign policies aiming to use a gender equality and feminist approach should include interpersonal conflicts, intra national conflicts as well as those between states. This is evident in the paper by Corey Levine who argues that a New Agenda for Peace should use a "human security" perspective -- meeting at the nexus between conventional security, as the definition of conflict to a more comprehensive approach including issue of peacebuilding and prevention of conflict to development policies , prioritizing the security and wellbeing of individuals and communities related to rule of law and international justice. Violence against women and girls, likewise, surpasses protection of women in conflict to other forms of gender-based violence, including early and forced marriage, 'honor' killings, sex trafficking, female genital mutilation practices, online violence, and lack of access to economic and social services.

   Where should we start? Dubravka Simonovic, former chair of CSW and CEDAW expert, and former special rapporteur on violence against women, proposes that an Emergency Action Plan on Gender Based Violence must be addressed by CSW. She argues that, since its founding, the CSW has changed from elaborating new instruments at the UN to scaling down its purpose to reporting, thus weakening its influence. She states that the wide implementation gap to achieve gender equality can be bridged by strengthening the CSW with tools for accountability.

3. **The feminist and women's movement can reinvigorate multilateralism but there must be a balanced power alignment.** The future of multilateralism can be radically changed to establish a new social contract, but these must be based on a more equalized and balanced alignment between different power levels from grassroots to international levels. Stated differently, ensuring women's equal representation and leadership at the local level—such as in cities and local governments -- is key to securing a gender equal multilateral space..

   Special attention should be given to multilateralism at the regional level. For example, Fatima Khafagy and Soon-Young Yoon argue that international action on climate change must be grounded in regional realities. They cite the example of how conflict over

resources in the MENA/Arab States regions are linked to cross-border water shortages as well as internal and external political conflicts. Aline Burni and Laeticia Thissen's examination of feminist foreign policies also notes that a regional intergovernmental entity like the European Union can be a strong normative influence to promote feminist foreign policies nationally as well as serve as a global example.

4. **Intersectionality is central to a feminist analysis.** Authors argue that tackling gender equality requires an analysis of how multiple and interacting layers of inequality are experienced by diverse groups of women and girls. When intersectionality is ignored, the power dynamics within which gender equality can or cannot be achieved remain invisible. This can have implications for international as well as local implementation of the OCA. For example, concerning feminist foreign policy, Aline Burni and Laeticia Thissen write that a truly feminist foreign policy is based on a concept of gender beyond a binary definition. It also aims at addressing economic inequalities and promoting justice related to a broad range of vulnerable groups such as LGBTQI+ communities, indigenous peoples, and disabled women and girls.

5. **Information is power.** A Pact for the Future should include commitments to make information a public good, particularly for the most marginalized women and girls who are often deprived of information. Furthermore, data and indicators must be co-created and shared from the grassroots to global levels, as well as from top downwards, ensuring more locally useful information to empower local communities.

   Greater efforts should also be made to use gender data and indicators across existing platforms related to the SDGs, while using a wider range of knowledge sources and experiences based on diverse cultural realities. Referring to challenges related to women's right to health, Sarah Hawkes, and Kent Buse call for a more holistic, comprehensive data source on sex/gender disaggregated data. This is needed so that women have a clear picture of the social determinants of health which are the major causes of female mortality—heart disease, diabetes, cancers, and respiratory ailments as well as mental health.

6. **Reforms should address power relations embedded in the economy and financing for development.** Numerous examples can be cited of the wide implementation deficit of governments 'obligations under CEDAW, the SDGs, and other international agreements related to the welfare and rights of women and girls. Rethinking the economic paradigm embedded in unequal power relations requires accounting for and giving value to women's unpaid care work (food production and nutrition, childcare etc.) as well as in low-paid care work such as in health and education.

   Investing in women's' rights has a triple dividend: it boosts the economy by accounting and valuing the contributions that the work of womenmake in creating economic value for the whole society. It strengthening social cohesion and improves the quality of our democracies.

   Concerning the participation of youth, Inlayda Eskitascioglu writes that the UN and member states have often failed to ensure adequate youth-focused funding and resourcing that responds to the felt needs of youth NGOs. The FRIDA Youth Feminist Fund stands out as a best practice, providing flexible funding for core support based on

local needs and diverse means of accessing funds. Such efforts are needed at the global level. For example, many global funds such as for climate financing should find more effective ways to clear barriers so that youth leaders can access much needed funds.

Some Final Thoughts

In times of scarcity—and in disaster and post-conflict recovery—investments in women and girls have proven to help societal resilience to shocks and prepare for good governance. Indeed, women's representation and participation are a critical step to better informed policymaking, and government response to ecological, political, and social challenges in society.

Yet, the backlash against gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls has been gaining momentum in multilateral as well as national spaces. Indeed, anti-rights states have used the UN to advance their agenda as well as push back against feminist multilateralism in meetings related to peace and security, human rights, financing for development as well as the SDGs. In this political climate, strengthening the force of civil society's presence at the UN, particularly the feminist and women's movement, is urgently needed.

We are reminded that governments, alone, did not create the UN. A revitalized and renewed social contract can find strength in the UN's Charter first powerful phrase: WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS –We the peoples, like the feminist and women's movement. These are key to ensuring a relevant UN that innovates to respond to future crises and continually refines its vision for future generations. We hope this Feminist Our Common Agenda Policy Series will take us one step closer to realizing that vision.

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REPORT
FEBRUARY 2023

ADVANCING OUR COMMON AGENDA

A feminist approach to women and health to inform the UN Secretary-General's Summit of the Future

Sarah Hawkes | Kent Buse

MESSAGE TO READERS

At GWL Voices, our advocacy pushes for the inclusion of women's voices in all spheres of society, particularly in peace and security, global governance, human rights, gender issues, international peace and security, environmental diplomacy, global health, and sustainable development.

Hence, as a collective voice of women's leadership, backed by the support of our partners, this report reflects our stance on an issue whose time is long overdue.

In the wake of unending global challenges, improving outcomes for women's health and upholding healthy societies are critical to advancing the UN Secretary General's Our Common Agenda Report.

We want to thank our partners, GGIN, C4UN, and WEDO, whose foresight and support have enabled us to carry out this critical work.

Here's to elevating our voices for change and inclusion while advancing the issues we care about most.

#GWL VOICES FOR CHANGE & INCLUSION

AUTHORS

Sarah Hawkes

Co-Founder and co-Director, Global Health 50/50 and Professor of Global Public Health UCL, UK

Kent Buse

Co-Founder and co-Director, Global Health 50/50 and Director Healthier Societies Programme, The George Institute for Global Health, Imperial College London UK

STATUS OF THE GLOBAL AGENDA ON WOMEN AND HEALTH

The global agenda on women and health encompasses three linked domains, namely health outcomes, their determinants and women's participation and leadership in the health workforce. Each of these domains is to some extent recognized in the multilateral agenda but the root causes are inadequately addressed.

Women's health and wellbeing outcomes

The COVID-19 pandemic illustrated vast inequalities experienced by different population groups in realising their right to health in the face of a threat to global health security. This was not an "equal opportunities" pandemic, and there were (and continue to be) markedly different experiences and outcomes across genders, races, ages, economic classes, geographies and other social groups. In terms of gender, data[1] from the beginning of the pandemic showed that men are more likely to suffer severe infections, be admitted to intensive care units and about 30% more likely to die compared to women. Women, however, are more likely to suffer the social consequences and secondary health impacts of the pandemic including gender-based violence and reduced access to sexual and reproductive health care services. UNFPA estimates that an additional 1.4 million unintended pregnancies occurred in 2020 owing to disruptions to family planning services[2].

Health status is driven by a mixture of biology and social determinants - encompassing the environments in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age, as well as the structural arrangements, including the economic, commercial and legal policies and institutions which drive these social environments.

COVID-19 is not unique in its sex-difference health impacts. In general, women live longer than men, but conversely spend more of their lives in ill-health. Broad global averages hide differences by both economic status of countries and the status of gender equality in countries– with the

1 Global Health 50/50: The Sex, Gender and COVID-19 Project: https://globalhealth5050.org/the-sex-gender-and-covid-19-project/

2 UNFPA: The impact of COVID-19 on family planning.zhttps://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/COVID_Impact_FP_V5.pdf

gap in healthy life expectancy between men and women recently increasing in low-income countries (LIC) but decreasing in the high-income countries (HIC)[3], while differences in mortality due to COVID-19 varied by a country's position on the UNDP gender inequality index[1]. The causes of illness, disability and death have changed significantly for people of all genders in the past two decades. The non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, diabetes, cancers, are the major cause of death including premature death (age 30-69 years) in women. Cardiovascular disease alone is estimated to account for over one third of all deaths in women, and although mortality rates improved from the 1990s onwards, this decline has recently "slowed down markedly"[4] – driven by a range of under-addressed risk factors. Understanding the full picture of the relationship between sex, gender and health is hampered by inconsistent, incomplete and inadequate reporting systems that frequently fail, at a minimum, to disaggregate health data by sex.

An opportunity to improve population health status while also making progress on gender equality requires/ demands a more comprehensive view of women's health and wellbeing: protecting and upholding sexual and reproductive health while also addressing women's health status across the life-course, and tackling the gendered determinants of health and wellbeing across all areas of health.

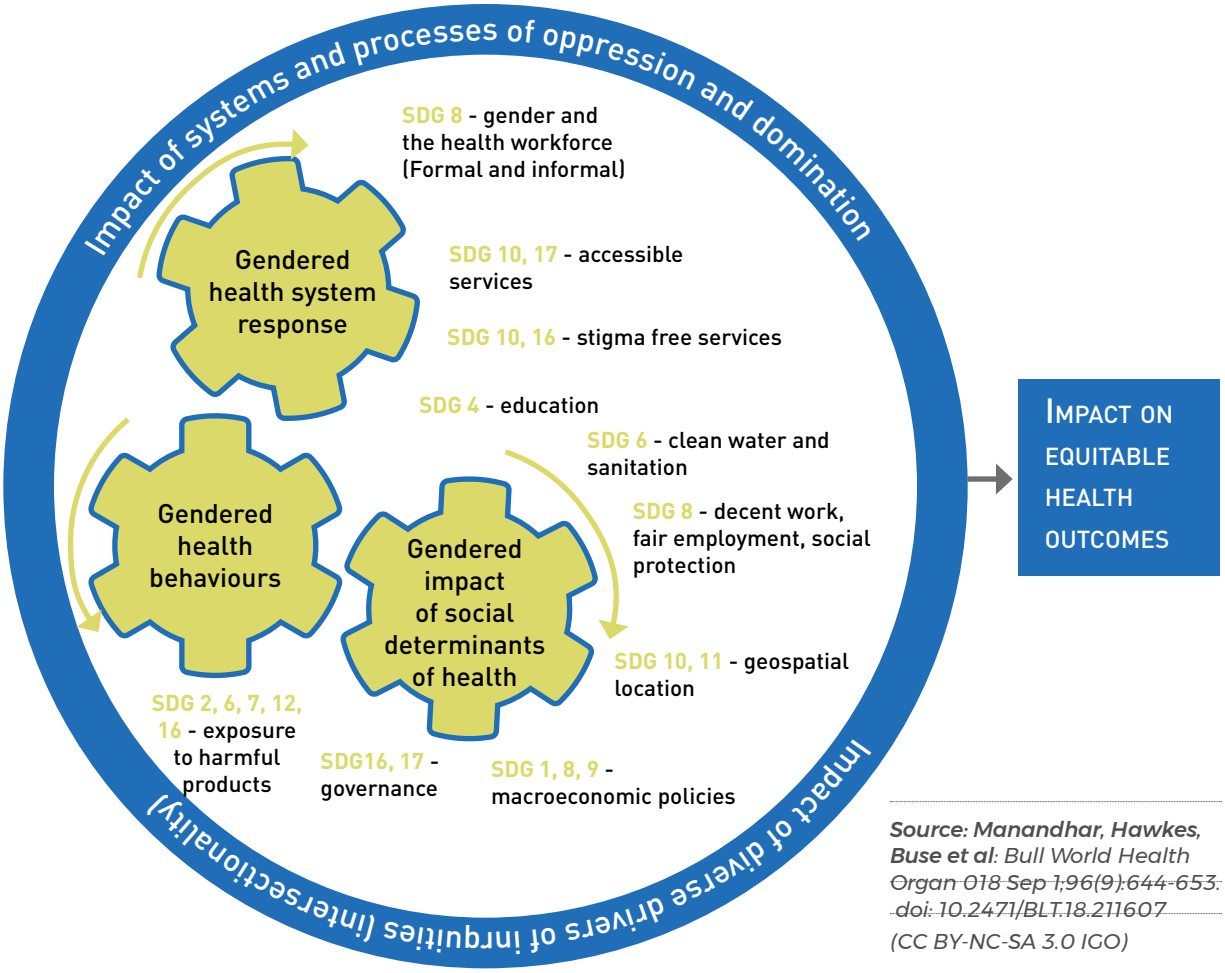
Determinants of women's health status

Health status is driven by a mixture of biology and social determinants - encompassing the environments in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age, as well as the structural arrangements, including the economic, commercial and legal policies and institutions which drive these social environments. Figure 1 illustrates how the determinants of health equity and gender inequality are interlinked across all SDGs. Access to health care systems plays a minor but essential role in population level health status. Realising the right to health means ensuring not only that people have access to health care but that their right to a healthy environment is upheld. Monitoring the relationship between health determinants and health status is hampered by uncoordinated systems of accountability that exist within silos and lack coherence across sectors.

3 WHO. The Global Health Observatory. https://www.who.int/data/gho/publications/world-health-statistics

4 Vogel, B. et al. The Lancet women and cardiovascular disease Commission: reducing the global burden by 2030. The Lancet 2021;397:2385-38. DOI:10.1016/S0140-6736(21)00684-X

Figure 1: Framework shows interactions between sustainable development goals 3 (health) and 5 (gender) with other global goals across three domains of gender and health



Source: Manandhar, Hawkes, Buse et al: Bull World Health Organ 018 Sep 1;96(9):644-653. doi: 10.2471/BLT.18.211607
(CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO)

EXAMPLE 1. Commercial determinants of health: Major contributors to rates of non-communicable diseases and premature mortality include alcohol and tobacco. Worryingly there is evidence of a closing of the gender gap in tobacco and alcohol use in many settings – in the case of alcohol this is predominantly driven by increasing use of alcohol by young women5, and similar concerns have been raised for tobacco use, including the use of e-cigarettes and vaping[4] particularly since these products may carry a higher risk of cardiovascular disease in women compared to men. Other increasing risks to women's health due to commercial determinants include the global rise in obesity and diabetes associated under-regulated markets in ultra-processed foods leading to widespread changes in patterns of diet and low rates of physical in-activity accompanying urbanization that has insufficiently gender-responsive urban planning that addresses women's physical safety including while using public transport or exercising. Women with diabetes may be at higher risk of health complications than men with the same condition[4].

5 Slade T, et al. Birth cohort trends in the global epidemiology of alcohol use and alcohol-related harms in men and women: systematic review and metaregression. BMJ Open 2016. https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/6/10/e011827

EXAMPLE 2. Global heating and health: Global heating carries a range of health impacts, both direct and indirect, such as risks of vector-borne disease, food insecurity, air pollution and poor air quality. Women's health is at particular risk: anemia rates rise during food insecurity; air pollution has a negative impact on birth outcomes; women's risk of violence (sexual, physical, domestic) increase during climate-associated humanitarian disasters[6].

Women working and making decisions in health and social care systems

Women in the workforce: Health and social care are an important source of paid, formal employment for women in many countries. Yet, health and social care systems, like most institutions, are frequently sites where power and privilege are unequally distributed. ILO estimates that women make up 67% of all health and social care workers, but women earn approximately 20% less than men in the sector[7]. This gender pay gap is larger than seen in other sectors within the same economies. Moreover, this gap does not consider the many millions of women who deliver on-the-ground health services but are unpaid community health worker "volunteers"[8], nor the contribution of women's unpaid labour to social and domestic care underpinning most economies.

Addressing these shifts in political and social norms is made more complex by the associated rise in scepticism towards the role/importance of and universal values of the multilateral system - including its role in upholding support for gender equality.

Women in positions of decision-making power: Five years of data[9] across 200 organisations in the global health system find that 70% of the leadership (Chief Executives and Board Chairs) are men, with 80% of them from high-income countries, while only 15 of over 2000 Board members are women from low-income countries – thus highlighting the intersectional challenges of gender, race and nationality faced by women from LMICs who seek to participate at senior levels in this 'global' system and the importance of disaggregated data for holding organisations and systems to account.

6 Sorenson C, et al. Climate change and women's health: impacts and policy directions. PLOS Medicine, 2018. https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1002603

7 ILO: Women in the health sector earn 24% less than men. https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_850968/lang--en/index.htm

8 Perry HB. Health for the People: National community health worker programs from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe. https://www.exemplars.health/-/media/files/egh/resources/community-health-workers/partner-content/health-for-the-peoplenational-chw-case-studies2020.pdf

9 Global Health 50/50 https://globalhealth5050.org/

MOVING OUR COMMON AGENDA FORWARD FOR WOMEN AND HEALTH

The OCA report calls for a renewal of the social contract between people and institutions, a rebuilding of trust, a focus on global public goods, and the upholding of human rights. Addressing the challenges to the health and wellbeing of women, including women who work within health systems, requires an integrated, intersectoral, well-funded approach based on human rights principles to support and ensure accountability for healthy people and a healthy planet.

Right to health care: The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted that health systems are frequently overwhelmed, under-funded, fragmented (e.g. across public and private sectors), and lack capacity to provide comprehensive disaggregated surveillance data required to monitor progress towards the goal of Leaving No-One Behind (LNOB). Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is a core strategy within OCA for achieving the right to health care without risk of financial hardship, but challenges to health service coverage have been compounded by the pandemic, the recent global economic downturn/recession and a failure to ensure equitable taxation systems that provide sufficient revenue to support social sectors including health-care.

Realising the right to health means ensuring not only that people have access to health care but that their right to a healthy environment is upheld.

Right to a healthy environment: In July 2022 the UNGA passed a historic resolution recognizing everyone's right to a healthy environment – thus moving towards OCA's goal of achieving healthy people and planet. The wide-ranging approach to a healthy environment can be leveraged to ensure clean air and safe water supplies, and also to ensure access to healthy food, clean and safe physical spaces within which women and girls can live, travel, work, exercise, play[10].

Right to decent work and right to participation: OCA highlights the importance of decent work, women's economic inclusion and investment in the care economy. As noted, the global health sector is characterized by the unequal distribution of power and pay: men are more likely to be in positions of leadership, while women are over-represented in the lower-paid or unpaid positions. The right to participation is highlighted within the OCA – thus emphasizing the importance of ensuring, including through social and policy measures, womens' equal inclusion in sites of decision-making.

10 https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/historic-move-un-declares-healthy-environment-human-right

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES AND IMPROVING OUTCOMES

The global health sector is characterized by the unequal distribution of power and pay: men are more likely to be in positions of leadership, while women are over-represented in the lower-paid or unpaid positions. The right to participation is highlighted within the OCA – thus emphasizing the importance of ensuring, including through social and policy measures, womens' equal inclusion in sites of decision-making.

Improving outcomes for women's health and wellbeing

An opportunity to improve population health status while also making progress on gender equality requires/demands a more comprehensive view of women's health and wellbeing: protecting and upholding sexual and reproductive health while also addressing women's health status across the life-course, and tackling the gendered determinants of health and wellbeing across all areas of health. However, there are significant challenges to such an approach:

POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL SHIFTS: we are witnessing a resurgence of conservative values and movements, along with state-led concerns around demographic deficits, particularly in the face of ageing populations and associated future costs of care for older people. This has contributed to the rise of populist and traditionalist views of gender equality (including around roles and expectations) and of reproductive autonomy. The starkest examples are seen in those settings where women and girls no longer have their rights realised to a comprehensive range of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services including family planning and safe abortion. Addressing these shifts in political and social norms is made more complex by the associated rise in scepticism towards the role/importance of and universal values of the multilateral system - including its role in upholding support for gender equality. Solutions: Promotion of UHC (including SRH services), along with finding solutions to demographic deficits, for example through the support through the development of innovative technologies or safe labour migration to overcome concerns around labour shortages, can help reframe challenges to the goal of gender equality.

ENVIRONMENTAL SHIFTS: climate disruption, pollution, urbanisation, consumption of health-harming products and loss of access to health-promoting spaces have a direct effect on the health of people and planet, with women and girls bearing disproportionate health and social impacts – including through the rise of non-communicable diseases, mental ill-health, and interpersonal violence. Solutions: recognition that: (i) health is determined across the life-course by a range of environmental, legal, political, commercial and economic institutions; (ii) gender inequality is embedded in the status quo of these institutions; (iii) addressing health inequity and gender equality as interlinked and inseparable will improve outcomes across SDG3 and SDG5 as well as other SDGs.

KNOWLEDGE SHIFTS: research in health and medicine has historically been conducted by and for the male body; women were excluded from clinical drug trials until very recently[11], half or less of public health and clinical studies report results in men and women separately[12], and the lack of action and coordination on disaggregated health data means that the impact of health determinants, policies, programmes and practices cannot be analysed by either sex or gender. Furthermore, calls to incorporate a gender lens into health policy and practice is often hampered by the lack of a comprehensive evidence base on the impact and effectiveness of such approaches. Solutions: Political, legal, academic, commercial and regulatory frameworks that drive the production of evidence for action in health and medicine must embed a sex and gender lens to address health inequities.

The non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, diabetes, cancers, are the major cause of death including premature death (age 30-69 years) in women.

Women's full and equal participation in the health and social care workforce

Health and social care have become feminized occupations with attendant loss of market 'worth' (in comparison to other sectors), compounded by a culture of "volunteerism" and profound inequalities hampering women's career progression to seats of decision-making power. The challenge is less one of full participation in employment in this sector, and more one of equality of pay and opportunity. The OCA provides an opportunity to act on both legislative/policy levels to promote equality of pay/promotion, as well as addressing the cultural shifts required for societies to recognize health and social care as being a pre-requisite for functioning and sustainable societies. This calls for a gender/feminist lens to be placed at the core of alternative Wellbeing Economy approaches alluded to in the Summary of OCA.

11 National Institutes of Health. How to engage, recruit and retain women in clinical research https://orwh.od.nih.gov/toolkit/recruitment/history

12 Sugimoto CR, Ahn Y-Y , Smith E, Macaluso B, Larivière V **Factors affecting sex-related reporting in medical research: a cross-disciplinary bibliometric analysis.** Lancet. 2019; **393**: 550-559

IDENTIFYING ACTIONS TO ADVANCE OUR COMMON AGENDA ON WOMEN AND HEALTH

Actions for the United Nations

- In policy documents and approaches across health and gender sectors, ensure that these are seen as interconnected and indivisible from each other and from the wider environments within which people are born, live, work, play.
- Move away from current siloed accountability and monitoring systems through promotion of a single
- platform that hosts a co-ordinated presentation of multiple current systems of accountability - including those for gender equality, health equity and the social/ structural determinants of health.
- Encourage the existing human rights mechanisms to more systematically incorporate a gender lens within reporting on the right to health, a healthy environment and structural.social health determinants.
- Support the human rights machinery to counter anti-gender equality movements that are pushing back on women's reproductive and bodily autonomy.

Actions for Member States

- Support transparency and accountability mechanisms at the country level. This can be done through strengthening a gendered health focus in voluntary national reviews, reporting to HLPF, United Nations development assistance frameworks, and national health sector plans and programmes, building on the approach developed for example by Global Health 50/50
- Deliver UHC that includes comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services
- Incentivise health system to report sex-disaggregated data across all health determinants and health outcomes, accompanied by gender analysis for action – thus ensuring that promises to leave no-one behind can be monitored and acted upon

- Reforms of legal and policy environment, in line with World Bank recommendations, to achieve full range of legislative options to ensure women's economic empowerment and participation in the paid workforce[13]

- Acknowledge and act on the gendered nature of the health workforce. Formulate gender sensitive policies and health professional regulations through all levels of health governance to ensure gender parity, increased leadership roles for women and decent conditions of work for all

- Reform of tax and fiscal policy to ensure sustainable financing to ensure that all employees in health and social care systems are paid fair wages and have decent working conditions

Actions for the private sector

- Commitment to principles and practice of ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) to ensure positive impact on society, environment and equality

- Develop, implement and uphold organizational policies to promote equality of career opportunity and an inclusive and diverse leadership

- Close gender pay gaps in health and social sectors

- For private sector involved in product development, R&D, innovation: ensure that sex and gender are taken into account from 'bench to bedside to delivery'

Actions for civil society, including trade unions

- Coordination and collaboration between gender-focused and health-focused civil society movements

- Support to accountability mechanisms at the country level building on the approach developed for example by Global Health 50/50, and designed to hold both Government and private sector to account for commiments and action on gender equality, health equity and decent work/equal pay

13 See here for examples: https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/wbl

COMMITMENTS TO ADVANCE OUR COMMON AGENDA ON WOMEN AND HEALTH – NEED TO BE BACKED BY IMPROVED MONITORING

Climate disruption, pollution, urbanisation, consumption of health-harming products and loss of access to health-promoting spaces have a direct effect on the health of people and planet, with women and girls bearing disproportionate health and social impacts – including through the rise of non-communicable diseases, mental ill-health, and interpersonal violence.

A range of existing commitments are in place for accountability to advance the agenda on women, gender equality and health. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights outline obligations on the right to health – emphasizing that this goes beyond the right to health care to also include the right to health-promoting environments, which would include gender equality. In addition, Article 12 of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women outlines the responsibility of states to ensure women's equal access to health care. However, reviews of health accountability mechanisms find that they are generally weak on gender commitments. Moreover, few countries have national legislation that combines the right to health with language on gender equality. Therefore, while global commitments are in place, specific accountability mechanisms[14] and national level commitments require strengthening if we are to see a world that achieves both gender equality and health equity.

14 Global Health 50/50 is one such example of a global monitoring mechanism that advances accountability for gender equality within the global health sector – annually reviewing both commitments and progress in gender-inclusive career pathways as well as commitments and delivery of gender-responsive health policies and programmes.

REPORT
FEBRUARY 2023

A EUROPEAN FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY?

THE NEED FOR A PROGRESSIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH

Aline Burni | Laeticia Thissen

MESSAGE TO READERS

February 2023

While a feminist approach to international relations has made significant strides across Europe, the European Union lags in adopting a feminist foreign policy across the union.

At GWL Voices, our advocacy pushes for the integration of women's voices in all spheres of society, particularly in international peace and security, global governance, human rights, gender issues, environmental diplomacy, global health, and sustainable development.

Hence, as a collective voice of women's leadership, backed by the support of our partners, this report reflects our stance on an issue whose time is long overdue.

Further, the report provides an opportunity for reflection. It serves as a call to action and a timely reminder to shift from the traditional form of foreign policy towards one that places women at the front and center.

Research shows that women's leadership fosters empathy, transparency, inclusivity, shared progress, and peace.

In the wake of unending global challenges, a feminist foreign policy offers hope for transformational leadership we all can trust - one that is unequivocally the way forward.

We want to thank our partners, GGIN, C4UN, and WEDO, whose foresight and support have enabled us to carry out this critical work.

Here's to elevating our voices for change and inclusion while advancing the issues we care about most.

#GWL VOICES FOR CHANGE & INCLUSION

AUTHORS

Aline Burni

Aline works since April 2022 as a Policy Analyst on International Relations for the Foundation of European Progressive Studies (FESP), in Brussels. She holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the Federal University of Minas Gerais (Brazil) and her doctoral thesis focused on the effect of the rise of populist radical right parties on immigration policies in Europe. During her doctoral studies, Aline was a Fulbright visiting scholar at the New York University (NYU), and a visiting researcher at the Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium). Before joining FEPS, Aline worked as a researcher for the global development think tank German Development Institute/ Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), today the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) in Bonn, where her academic and policy advice work centered on international cooperation, EU development policy, and populism. Her research has been published in academic journals like Global Affairs, The European Journal of Development Research, and the Journal of Common Market Studies, as well as in European media outlets including Política Exterior, Internationale Politik and Development & Cooperation. Aline has applied experience working with multi-sector international partnerships and international cooperation for development, having worked in the past as a Local Consultant and Project Coordinator for the international NGO PYXERA Global, and as Head of the National and International Partnerships Advisory for the Minas Gerais State Government, in Brazil.

Laeticia Thissen

Laeticia works as a Policy Analyst for Gender Equality at the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) where she is in charge of the foundation's work related to women's rights, equality and anti-discrimination issues. Over the years, her work focused on topics ranging from gender injustice to care work and gender-based violence. Before joining FEPS she has worked in the European Committee of the Regions and in the European Parliament. She holds a Master's degree in European Studies from Maastricht University and in Gender Studies from ULB (Université Libre de Bruxelles). Additionally, she completed a post-academic specialisation course on "Migration, Ethnic Diversity and Intercultural Relationships" and is a member of the Brussels Binder network, an initiative committed to improve gender diversity in policy debates and that aims to promote women's voices.

WHY A FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY?

From Ukraine to Afghanistan, Sudan, Yemen, Myanmar, and Iran, resilience against acts of deprivation of liberty and revolts against human rights attacks has had "a female face."[1], with women and marginalized groups taking the streets, becoming actively involved or directly attacked in (post-) conflict zones. This must be noticed in the international community's response, which needs a holistic security approach that puts human security at its core. Yet, unfortunately, there is a proven track record of women and girls taking a heavier toll from armed conflict settings and crises.[2] In addition, conflict and post-conflict countries tend to show the highest sexual violence rates worldwide, with rape and other forms of gender-based violence being used as weapons of war.[3] Yet, women also play an essential role in peacebuilding and conflict prevention.[4] Feminist international relations scholars have demonstrated that countries with a focus on gender equality tend to pursue foreign policies that are less belligerent.[5] Achieving gender equality therefore constitutes a precondition for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 "Peace, justice and strong institution," among others.[6] Moreover,

FFP should not be just another buzzword. Neither does it correspond to just another topic. Much more than that, it is a process and comprehensive approach to foreign policy.

1 United Nations, "At Security Council debate, delegates call for women's inclusion in all peace processes, protection of human rights defenders," United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, *October 20, 2022*, accessed on November 30, 2022, from: https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc15071.doc.htm

2 UNFPA, "Ukraine: Conflict compounds the vulnerabilities of women and girls," *United Nations Population Fund*, November 14, 2022, accessed on November 30, 2022, from: https://libguides.murdoch.edu.au/footnote/examples

3 UNODC, "Global Study on Homicide," *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, 2019, accessed on November 29, 2022, from: https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/global-study-on-homicide.html

4 Valerie M Hudson and Patrica Leidl, *The Hillary Doctrine – Sex and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); Valerie Hudson, Bonnie Ballif-Spanvill, Mary Caprioli and Chad Emmett, *Sex and World Peace* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

5 Kirsten P. Williams, "Feminism in Foreign Policy" in *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)

6 UN Women, "Why Gender Equality Matters across all SDGs: An excerpt of turning promises into action: Gender equality in the 2023 agenda for sustainable development", 2018. Accessed on 29/11/2022 from: https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/2/gender-equality-in-the-2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development-2018

in times of limited resources, evidence shows that investing in women and girls bolsters good governance, economic growth, community health, peace, and stability.[7] Here precisely lies the essence of a feminist approach to international relations, which has gained significant ground across Europe – and in the Global South – since the original decision by the Swedish Social Democratic and Green coalition at the time to explicitly adopt a **feminist foreign policy (FFP)**.

Structural reforms of EU institutions dealing with foreign affairs are necessary, particularly cultural and institutional changes aiming at a more balanced composition of decision-making bodies, which incentivize the presence of women in office, and that lead to the adoption of more participatory and inclusive processes of decision-making. Furthermore, the EU must put in place a mechanism of listening to the stories and perspectives of women and all subaltern groups to reflect on one's privileged position and responsibilities within the global community.

The search for more peaceful and secure societies has increased the interest in and engagement on FFP, mainly by European national governments. While it is excellent news that FFP is becoming more 'normalized' in the public debate and increasingly gaining the attention of government actors, the development of a more ambitious concept, policy, and action should be continued. While there have been significant advancements with the adoption and practice of a FFP by some national governments, a more ambitious, progressive, and transformative approach must be continuously advocated by feminists, civil society organizations, and policymakers alike. In particular, the European Union (EU) should be more determined to adopt and practice feminist principles in its external action. Given its supranational and inter-governmental nature, a FFP at the EU level represents the opportunity to amplify the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of marginalized groups globally through a leading actor and a normative power in international politics. As Europe finds itself in the most severe security crisis since the end of World War II, there is momentum to transform its external action. At the same time, the feminist branding of foreign policy coincides with the increased political commitment to gender equality through numerous initiatives.[8] including the EU's self-declared "Union of Equality" underpinned by its Gender Equality and LGBTIQ strategies. Amid what can be considered a "feminist turn in foreign policy." [9], we, therefore, reflect in this policy brief on the opportunities and challenges of more clearly linking the external action and (gender) equality agendas into a European feminist foreign policy and put forth some policy recommendations to contribute to the debates.

7 Jamile Bigio and Rachel Vogelstein, "Understanding Gender Equality in Foreign Policy – What the United States Can Do" (*New York:* Council on Foreign Relations, 2020).

8 Cadesky, Jessica. "Built on shaky ground: Reflections on Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy." *International Journal,* (2020). Accessed November 30, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020702020953424.

9 Jennifer Thomson, "The growth of feminist (?) foreign policy," E-International Relations, 10 February 2020 https://www.e-ir.info/2020/02/10/the-growth-of-feminist-foreign-policy/ (accessed on November 30, 2022)

WHAT IS FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY?

What is certain, FFP should not be just another buzzword. Neither does it correspond to just another topic. Much more than that, it is a process and comprehensive approach to foreign policy. For the time being, FFP is a developing practice, and there is no single or consolidated definition.[10] Considering this gap, feminist theorists have sought to offer ways forward by delineating the concept. Thomson et al.[11]namely conceive of it as "the policy of a state that defines its interactions with other states, as well as movements and other non-state actors, in a manner that prioritizes peace, gender equality and environmental integrity, enshrines, promotes, and protects the human rights of all; seeks to disrupt colonial, racist, patriarchal and male-dominated power structures; and allocates significant resources, including research, to achieve that vision." FFP looks not only at the immediate security needs in times of war and conflict to overcome inequalities, gender, and racist stereotypes but also colonial legacies and asymmetries of power in global relations. A FFP endeavors to show consistency across all domains of influence and closely connects with grassroots feminist movements while exercising those values abroad and at home. As such, it applies to all international efforts: peace and security but also trade, development aid, diplomacy, consular services, and immigration, among others. Moreover, it tries to do so while looking at the long-term challenges and the various factors affecting human security: social and economic development, healthcare, conflict prevention, and women's rights. Advancing human rights means promoting security and sustainable peace, as it has been shown that crucial factors fostering violence are gender inequality and the subjugation of women.[12] Likewise, FFP becomes effective through the simultaneous use of internal processes and measures coupled with external standards fed by the first-hand experience of civil society organizations (CSOs). It also requires questioning one's internal organization, structures, and practice. To be able to walk the talk, freeing foreign policy from old structural power relations and methods is necessary.

The traditional way foreign and security policy has been conducted has led to a status quo failing most people and causing harm to others, especially to the most vulnerable and marginalized.

10 Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy, "Feminist foreign policy," Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy https://centreforfeministforeignpolicy.org/feminist-foreign-policy (accessed November 30, 2022).

11 Thompson, Lyric, Gayatri Patel, Gawain Kripke, and Megan O'Donnell. 2020. Toward a Feminist Foreign Policy in the United States. Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women, p. 19, Accessed on November 29, 2022, https://genderandsecurity.org/projects-resources/research/toward-feminist-foreign-policy-united-states

12 Enloe, Cynthia. *The Big Push: Exposing and Challenging the Persistence of Patriarchy*. 1st ed. The University of California Press, 2017. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1g248zv.

Emphasizing its potential for promoting equality, justice, solidarity, and peace, the Center for Feminist Foreign Policy understands FFP as a "political framework" centered around the well-being of marginalized people. It invokes processes of self-reflection regarding foreign policy's hierarchical systems.[13] It states that "FFP takes a step outside the black box approach of traditional foreign policy thinking and its focus on military force, violence, and domination by offering an alternative and intersectional rethinking of security from the viewpoint of the most vulnerable."[14] The traditional way foreign and security policy has been conducted has led to a status quo failing most people and causing harm to others, especially to the most vulnerable and marginalized. In that sense, FFP constitutes a multidimensional policy framework that aims to elevate women's and marginalized groups' experiences, stories, and agency to scrutinize the destructive forces of patriarchy, colonization, heteronormativity, capitalism, racism, imperialism, and militarism. In other words, it offers a transformative tool to question current imbalances of power and inequalities perpetuating millions of people's state of vulnerability and injustice worldwide.

> **This approach is rooted in a transformative agenda aiming to "change structures and enhance the visibility of women and girls as actors" (ibid.). Moreover, it is part of an overall effort to tackle intersectional forms of discrimination, simultaneously seeking to tackle sexism, racism, classism, and overlapping forms of discrimination.**

Another indispensable element of FFP is the context-specificity and the need to bring in the perspectives of those the policies affect. By drawing on feminist theory and the ethics of care, the theoretical framework of Aggestam et al enables us to think of FFP as "grounded in the locality of those at its receiving end".[15] In this line of ethical thinking, care is understood in a broad sense as "everything we do to maintain, continue and repair our world. [16]". The centrality of care and dialogue is what underpins the moral ambitions of FFP, which "takes into account the situated moral stories and experiences of individuals and in particular women whose voices have not been considered in traditional foreign policy analysis and IR." Following the lines of care ethics scholars in foreign policy thus implies a qualitative shift in IR from a sovereign-based logic ("the right to intervene") to an ethics of global care based on "the responsibility to protect."[17] By carefully deconstructing gendered power relations, FFP thus offers a way to address systemic discrimination and the structural barriers that prevent the achievement of more equal societies across the globe. FFP is, therefore, necessary to the fulfillment of international commitments on gender equality, social justice, non-discrimination, and human rights and should be coherently applied across all sub-fields of foreign policy, as well as in both the domestic and external dimensions.

13 ibid footnote 10

14 ibid footnote

15 Aggestam, K., Bergman Rosamond, A., & Kronsell, A. (2019). Theorizing feminist foreign policy. *International Relations, 33*(1), 23–39. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117818811892

16 The United Nations has organized four world conferences on women. These took place in Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985, and Beijing in 1995. A series of five-year reviews followed the last. Source: https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/world-conferences-on-women

17 Tronto, Joan. 2008. "Is Peacekeeping Care Work?: A Feminist Reflection on the Responsibility to Protect." In ***Global Feminist Ethics***, edited by Rebecca Whisnant and Peggy Des Autels, 179-200. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Early feminist activists paved the way long before FFP became popular. In 1915, around 1500 women from 14 countries (including Germany, England, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Italy, and Canada) gathered for the International Peace Congress of Women in The Hague in the interest of world peace.[18] These women met their sisters from countries at war with their own belligerent countries. At a time in which the international community was threatened, they gathered "to protest from [their] hearts against the barbarity of the war [...] but furthermore [they] would fain suggest ways by which this large internationalism may find itself and dig new channels through which it may flow."[19] Likewise, Cynthia Enloe's work in 1990 revealed the crucial role of women in implementing governmental foreign policies deconstructing the idea of it being exclusively a men's domain.[20] Whilst FFP has recently found a strong resonance through national government commitments, these efforts find their roots in long-standing multilateral developments such as the 1979 United Nations (UN) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)[21]. The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing was a decisive turning point for the global agenda for gender equality with the unanimously adopted Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action.[22] The latter highlights women's essential role in the achievement of lasting peace. With a specific focus on feminist peace, the adoption of resolution 1325 has been the first to recognize the importance of women's perspectives and involvement in peace and security in an explicit manner. It has contributed to establishing the so-called Women, Peace, and Security Agenda (WPS).

FFP thus offers a way to address systemic discrimination and the structural barriers that prevent the achievement of more equal societies across the globe. FFP is, therefore, necessary to the fulfillment of international commitments on gender equality, social justice, non-discrimination, and human rights and should be coherently applied across all sub-fields of foreign policy, as well as in both the domestic and external dimensions.

18 Lochner, Louis P. "The International Peace Congress of Women." ***The Advocate of Peace (1894-1920)*** 77, no. 7 (1915): 173–75. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20667269.

19 ibid. footnote 18

20 Enloe, Cynthia. ***Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics***. 2nd ed. The University of California Press, 2014. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt6wqbn6.

21 https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm

22 "Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action", UN Women, accessed on November 30, 2022, https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/PFA_E_Final_WEB.pdf

Therefore, when the idea of FFP was first introduced in 2014 by Sweden[23], the gendered dimension of foreign policy was in fact, far from unknown. And yet, it was met with much suspicion and even ridicule, as declared by Margot Wallström herself.[24] Nevertheless, the systematic integration in external affairs of women and girls' rights, followed by the mobilization of adequate resources and the promotion of women's representation in decision-making (the so-called three R's of Swedish FFP) has produced tangible results and changes, ending by encouraging other pioneering countries which have incorporated (or made an effort to adopt) feminist principles into their foreign policies too. Several countries adhering to the approach have been on a constant rise (see Table 1). Canada followed suit in 2017. Then came France, Mexico, Spain, Luxembourg, Germany, Chile[25] and the Netherlands. Others have declared their intention to do the same, like Belgium, The Netherlands[26], Libya[27], Cyprus, and Scotland.[28] In other cases, the promotion of gender equality has been at the heart of the different dimensions of foreign policy, even without adopting the same labels, notably in Finland[29], Denmark, Norway, Australia as well as Switzerland. Hilary Clinton, then US Secretary of State, coined the "Hilary Doctrine" according to which the oppression of women constitutes a national as well as global threat.[30] Moreover, the phenomenon is not restricted to states; political parties also adhere to the FFP agenda. In the UK, the Labour Party[31] has namely adopted a feminist approach to development and the manifesto of the Women's Equality Party[32] similarly outlines its vision for a FFP.

A true FFP requires decisive action to address the domestic dimension of gender equality.

23 It is interesting to note that it was done the same year as Russia's invasion of Crimea: https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/12/05/can-vladimir-putin-be-intimidated-by-feminism-sweden/

24 Foreign Policy Magazine, "Sweden's Foreign Minister has no time for giggles," April 6, 2016, podcast, https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/04/06/swedens-foreign-minister-has-no-time-for-giggles/

25 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, " Foreign Minister Antonia Urrejola: "The development of a feminist foreign policy will be a distinguishing hallmark and a vanguard element of our diplomacy.", March 22, 2022, accessed on November 30, 2022, https://www.minrel.gob.cl/foreign-minister-antonia-urrejola-the-development-of-a-feminist

26 Government of the Netherlands, "Feminist foreign policy explained", November 18, 2022, accessed on November 30, 2022, https://www.government.nl/latest/news/2022/11/18/feminist-foreign-policy-netherlands

27 "What Does a Feminist Foreign Policy Mean for Libya?", *The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy,* February 28, 2022, accessed on November 29, 2022, https://timep.org/commentary/analysis/what-does-a-feminist-foreign-policy-mean-for-libya/

28 Scottish Government, "Scotland's feminist approach to foreign policy: background note," November 2, 2022, accessed on November 30, 2022, https://www.gov.scot/publications/background-note-scotlands-feminist-approach-foreign-policy/#:~:text=%22Feminist%20foreign%20policy%20is%20the,all%3B%20seeks%20to%20disrupt%20colonial%2C

29 Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, "What does a feminist foreign policy mean? ", October 27, 2022, accessed on November 29, 2022, https://um.fi/current-affairs/-/asset_publisher/gc654PySnjTX/content/mita-on-feministinen-ulkopolitiikka-/35732

30 Valerie M Hudson and Patrica Leidl, ***The Hillary Doctrine – Sex and American Foreign Policy*** (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015)

31 Labour Party, "A world for the many, not the few," March 2018, Policy Paper, accessed November 30, 2022, https://www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/uploads/editor/files/World_For_The_Many.pdf

32 Women's Equality Party, "A manifesto not just to remain in the European Union, but to advance because equality is better for everyone," accessed on November 30, 2022: https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/womensequality/pages/6633/attachments/original/1557929876/EU_Manifesto_Updated_compressed.pdf?1557929876

FFP first and foremost, encourages thorough reflection on the meaning of feminism because it forces foreign affairs officials to rethink what it means before applying the notion to their work. Anne Linde, former minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, says it "requires us to consider everything through a gender lens and highlight the need for a gender perspective in areas that have been considered gender-neutral by default."[33] When feminist (and human rights) values face setbacks across the world, this already constitutes an important step in acknowledging the gendered nature and effects of foreign policy and proposing some actions to do things differently.

When feminist (and human rights) values face setbacks across the world, this already constitutes an important step in acknowledging the gendered nature and effects of foreign policy and proposing some actions to do things differently.

Admittedly, the exact contours of a FFP agenda still need to be fixed, and the recent withdrawal by the new Swedish Government in 2022 clearly shows its fragility. Besides, the term "feminism" across the different FFPs tends to be used in very different ways and can carry negative connotations for some political actors. For instance, even though Sweden and Canada have endorsed the principle, they apply it in very contrasted manners.[34] In the Swedish case, FFP is centred around the problem of gender inequality as part of the more significant domestic effort to pursue feminist values and gender mainstreaming. The ethical normative framework of the WPS agenda has thus spurred countries like Sweden to reframe their foreign policies by putting gender equality at the center of international peace and security.[35] Instead, the Canadian FFP focuses on tackling poverty through international aid, whereby the private sector is presented as a driving force to pursue a feminist policy agenda. In other words, one critique of this approach is that it tends to underpin a neoliberal understanding of feminism, presenting women and girls as "superwomen"[36] suggesting that their empowerment is a precondition for the local communities economic growth, which limits the policy's potential impact.[37] The ambiguity around the notion thus bears the risk of stripping it from its transformative potential or being instrumentalized politically in support of measures failing to dismantle patriarchal systems entrenching gender inequalities. Cadesky warns that "concepts and tools related to gender equality have been over-politicized to serve larger political interests, leading to co-optation, misapplication, or erasure."[38]. In this regard, the case of gender mainstreaming is all too telling. Being all too often reduced to an outdated "add and stir" method in development policy whereby gender issues are merely added to existing ones, it is rather illustrative of the depoliticization of equality policies.[39] Maria Stratigaki namely argued that gender mainstreaming – which was introduced in 1996 to promote gender equality across all EU policies – effectively resulted in “an alibi for neutralizing

33 Harvard International Review, "Spearheading Security: Interview with Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde," April 12, 2021, accessed on November 30, 2022, https://hir.harvard.edu/ann-linde/

34 Thomson J. What’s Feminist about Feminist Foreign Policy? Sweden’s and Canada’s Foreign Policy Agendas. International Studies Perspectives. 2020 Nov 30;21(4):424-437. https://doi.org/10.1093/isp/ekz032

35 Aggestam and Rosamond, 2019

36 Laura J. Shepherd (2011) Sex, Security and Superhero(in)es: From 1325 to 1820 and Beyond, International Feminist Journal of Politics, 13:4, 504-521, DOI: 10.1080/14616742.2011.611659

37 Laura Parisi, Canada's New Feminist International Assistance Policy: Business as Usual?, ***Foreign Policy Analysis***, Volume 16, Issue 2, April 2020, Pages 163–180, https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orz027

38 Cadesky, J. (2020). Built on shaky ground: Reflections on Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy. ***International Journal***, ***75***(3), p. 305. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020702020953424

39 Jahan, Rounaq, and Soofia Mumtaz. “The Elusive Agenda: Mainstreaming Women in Development [with Comments].” ***The Pakistan Development Review*** 35, no. 4 (1996): 825–34. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41260001.

positive action."[40] Paradoxically, there is also a parallel tendency whereby "gender equality" becomes over-politicized through its systematic erasure and replacement with "equality between men and women," with important implications for narrowing the term.[41] Likewise, overemphasizing women and girls often leads to squeezing out issues related to the elimination of gender inequalities and patriarchal norms at large.[42]. Therefore, using the feminist label is only one step in the right direction, but avoiding it becoming either de-politicized or over-politicized remains the most significant challenge for a meaningful FFP.

Overall, the Swedish approach of FFP[43]" is based on the “three R’s” rule revolving around rights, resources, and representation for women. The latter is complemented with a fourth R considering the reality in which women live. This approach is rooted in a transformative agenda aiming to "change structures and enhance the visibility of women and girls as actors". Moreover, it is part of an overall effort to tackle intersectional forms of discrimination, simultaneously seeking to tackle sexism, racism, classism, and overlapping forms of discrimination experienced by women.

Likewise, Germany's FFP is inspired by the 3Rs model complemented with a "D" for diversity. Making it clear that FFP is about including – not excluding – its policy is based on the understanding that it is not exclusively about women but all those who are marginalized on a different basis, such as gender, origins, religion, or sexuality whose voices need to be heard in the construction of sustainable peace and security. Similarly, Canada applies a so-called "GBA+" (gender-based analysis) to ensure the inclusion of all people in all their diversity, taking an intersectional lens. To fully operationalize FFP, two further measures of success can be considered core components of FFP: research & reporting and reach (cf. Table 2). More recently, the Global Partner Network to Advance Feminist Foreign Policy, a collective whose aim is to encourage the learning and adoption of a shared framework for FFP, has identified five key ingredients[44]: (1) purpose, (2) definition, (3) reach, (4) intended outcomes and benchmarks to achieve over time and (5) plan to operationalize.

Making FFP a reality thus demands a radical shift in conceiving, carrying out, and deciding about foreign policy. Although some critical policy initiatives have been put in place, substantial change will likely happen by breaking current power dynamics at the EU level and beyond, as stated by Ridge et al.[45], "[i]f the application of a feminist foreign policy doesn't change practice, it isn't feminist." The question ahead of us is, therefore, whether the European Union has the potential to help advance the objectives of a feminist foreign policy globally?

40 Stratigaki, M. (2005). Gender mainstreaming vs. positive action: an ongoing conflict in EU gender equality policy. European Journal of Women's Studies, 12(2), 165-186. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506805051236

41 See, for instance, how Poland and Hungary systematically block reference to gender equality: https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/news/poland-hungary-block-gender-equality-from-eu-social-summit/ see also: Rebecca Tiessen and Krystel Carrier, The erasure of “gender” in Canadian foreign policy under the Harper Conservatives: The significance of the discursive shift from “gender equality” to “equality between women and men,” Canadian Foreign Policy Journal 21 no. 2 (2015).

42 see footnote 38

43 Government Offices of Sweden Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Handbook - Sweden's feminist foreign policy," 2019, accessed on November 29, 2022, https://www.government.se/492c36/contentassets/fc115607a4ad4bca913cd8d11c2339dc/handbook---swedens-feminist-foreign-policy---english.pdf

44 “Feminist Foreign Policy: A Framework”, available at: https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/FFP_Framework_EN_June2021update.pdf

45 Ridge, A., Lambert, C., and Crawford, J., Clement, R., Thompson, L., Gammage, S., and Goetz, A.M., 2019. Feminist Foreign Policy Key Principles & Accountability Mechanisms: A Discussion Summary, International Women's Development; International Center for Research on Women; Center for Global Affairs (New York University), p. 5.

IS A EUROPEAN FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY POSSIBLE?

While several European countries have adopted a foreign policy with a strong focus on gender equality, the EU still lags and lacks a clear plan. This does not mean that the EU hasn't made any efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in its external action, but for the time being, they seem to be insufficient and conceptually limited. The European Commission has committed itself to a "Union of Equality" as of its first day in office, back in 2019. Stating that it "will enhance gender mainstreaming by systematically including a gender perspective in all stages of policy design in all EU policy areas, internal and external" while "using intersectionality as a cross-cutting principle," the Commission also recognized the need for coherence in the EU's action internally and externally. The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 explicitly identifies gender inequality as a "global problem" to be curbed as "the core objective of EU external action". It hails the role the EU must play as a promoter of gender equality and women's empowerment through its international partnerships, in political and human rights dialogues with partner countries, as well as its trade, neighborhood, and enlargement policy but also in its actions in fragile, conflict and emergencies. Accordingly, the current scenario of war offers a timely reminder of these commitments in the face of severe challenges to the global order and international security. Sweden and Spain will hold successive Presidencies of the Council of the EU in 2023 – both countries where FFP has already been adopted. This could be an opportunity to advance a European feminist foreign policy further.

A truly feminist foreign policy understands gender beyond a binary definition. It aims at tackling inequalities, promoting justice, and addressing intersectionality concerning a broad range of vulnerable, marginalized, and subaltern groups, including LGBTQ+ communities, indigenous peoples, disabled people, etc.

With specific attention to women's rights, the EU has launched the Spotlight Initiative in a multiyear partnership with the UN. This global program worth EUR 500 million aims to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030. It drew on the #WithHer campaign to highlight the stories of survivors and activists to challenge harmful gender norms and stereotypes. Moreover, the EU Strategic Approach and Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2019-2024 continues to be implemented, whereas the Council also approved the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024)

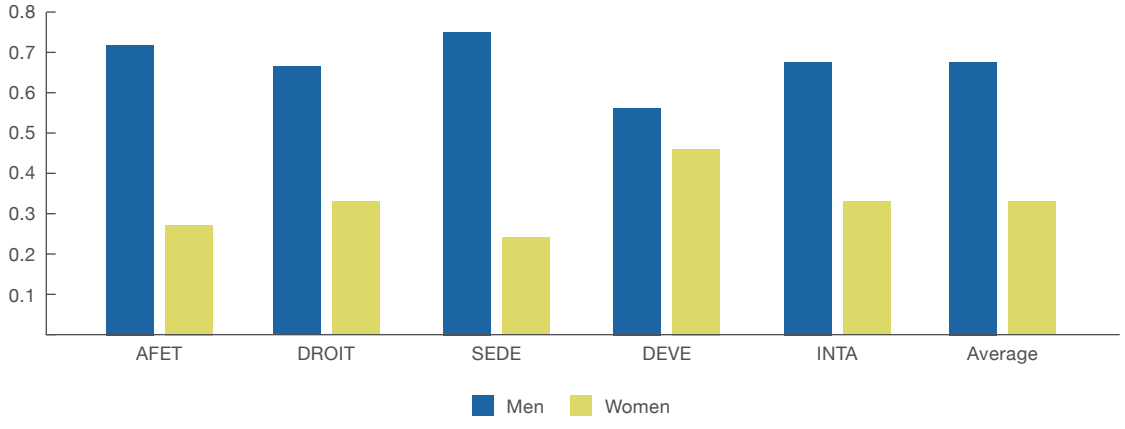
in November 2020. Through its active engagement with the World Trade Organisation (WTO), it seeks to apply a gender lens to its trade policy, for instance, by providing gender-disaggregated data to ensure trade-related aspects of gender are adequately addressed in trade agreements and to consider gender impacts in trade initiatives.

However, beyond the initiatives of the Commission in those multilateral fora and on top of the EU's internal commitments to gender equality, one may wonder to what extent gender equality and other feminist principles have also been reflected in the EU's external action policy as such. To what extent has the EU adopted and applied feminist principles in its international relations? The answer is a little. And it starts from the fact that the EU's internal structures dealing with and deciding on foreign policy remain anchored in a traditional approach. As Laura Chappell (2021) has discussed, even though the European External Action Service (EEAS) created the position of Principal Advisor on Gender and on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2015, there is a lack of gender mainstreaming both within the EEAS and the policies it promotes and implements.

Another indispensable element of FFP is the context-specificity and the need to bring in the perspectives of those the policies affect.

Furthermore, gender mainstreaming is viewed as purely a tick-box exercise, and there is an apparent underrepresentation of women in various parts of the EEAS. For example, almost 80 percent of senior and nearly 70 percent of middle management posts in the EEAS are held by men. A similar pattern of male dominance is observed in the European Parliament, where the central committees and subcommittees dealing with foreign policy do not reflect gender balance nor the increasing representation of women as identified in the EP as a whole over the last few years. As shown in Graph 1 below, on average, only 33 percent of those committees and subcommittees dealing with an external policy are composed of women. Without surprise, the International Development (DEVE) committee is the one closest to gender balance, with 55 percent of men and 45 percent of women Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). However, the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE) are primarily composed of men (more than 70 percent).

Proportion of women in international relations committees and subcommittees in the European Parliament (2022)



Source: Authors' compilation based on data from the European Parliament (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/portal/en)

At the policy level, the EU lacks an ambitious approach to feminist principles. Since 2010, two successive Gender Action Plans have been adopted - GAP I and GAPII - extending until 2020. Furthermore, in November 2020, as part of its Work Programme, the Commission and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security communicated a new Gender Action Plan for its external action, GAP III, entitled "An ambitious agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment in EU external action ."In a nutshell, GAP III puts forth five pillars:

1. To make gender equality a crosscutting priority of EU external action in its programming and policy work, setting the ambition to have 85 percent of all new external activities contributing to gender equality by 2025 and with new trade agreements including a provision on this objective;

2. The compromise to promote strategic EU engagement on behalf of gender equality at multilateral fora, as well as regional and country levels;

3. **A focus on critical areas of concentration, defined as:**
   - fighting gender-based violence
   - promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights
   - empowering girls and women, advancing equal participation and leadership.
   - implementing the women, peace, and security agenda
   - exploring the nexus with the green and digital transformations

4. The EU to lead by example.

5. The implementation of GAP III should be subject to qualitative and quantitative monitoring.

The European Parliament has taken a more ambitious perspective on the promotion of feminist principles in the EU's external action. In March 2022, it adopted a resolution expressing a positive view on several initiatives by GAP III but also calling for strengthening and being more concrete about others. In particular, the EP has pledged to gender mainstreaming, protecting women's rights, promoting women's equitable participation in conflict prevention and mediation, and advocated that 85 percent of official development assistance (ODA) goes to programs with gender equality as a significant or primary objective. Furthermore, the EP recognized the need for an intersectional approach and called for mandatory training on GAP III for all managers at headquarters, EU delegations, and all staff working in EU external action.

FFP constitutes a multidimensional policy framework that aims to elevate women's and marginalized groups' experiences, stories, and agency to scrutinize the destructive forces of patriarchy, colonization, heteronormativity, capitalism, racism, imperialism, and militarism.

Despite those positive policy initiatives, the EU has not yet managed to advance a feminist foreign policy. On the one hand, GAP III has not yet found the support of all EU institutions, namely because the Council could not reach a position on the document as Bulgaria, Hungary, and Poland have not endorsed it– all countries with problematic records on women's rights. On the other hand, several policy documents following the communication of GAP III have overlooked the principles of gender equality put forth by the latter, for instance, the EU's Strategic Compass of 2022. Considering those pitfalls, we advance some policy recommendations towards a European feminist foreign policy in the next session.

FFP first and foremost, encourages thorough reflection on the meaning of feminism because it forces foreign affairs officials to rethink what it means before applying the notion to their work.

TIME FOR A PARADIGM SHIFT: RECOMMENDATIONS

A European FFP would be an opportunity to create and implement external action based on feminist principles at the level of the EU, thus considerably expanding its scope and protecting FFP from political fluctuations at national governments. Furthermore, although the Union shares foreign policy competencies with its member states, it has a set of initiatives and legislation with an impact on partner countries, notably in the fields of international trade, development cooperation, and Common Security and Development Policy (CSDP), as well as the external dimension of the Green Deal, which could primarily benefit from a feminist approach. Considering the above reflections, we formulate four main policy recommendations for a more critical, ambitious, and progressive EU FFP.

1

ADOPT A MORE AMBITIOUS APPROACH TO FFP

While it is excellent news that the EU has made some efforts to promote gender equality in its external action, the concept of gender remains limited and narrowly defined. In contrast, the EU has not proposed adopting an explicitly 'feminist' foreign policy for the time being. The EU generally refers to 'equality between men and women' and therefore approaches gender from a binary perspective mostly. However, a truly feminist foreign policy understands gender beyond a binary definition. It aims at tackling inequalities, promoting justice, and addressing intersectionality concerning a broad range of vulnerable, marginalized, and subaltern groups, including LGBTQIA+ communities, indigenous peoples, disabled people, etc. An expansive notion of gender, as elaborated by UN Women, acknowledges that there are more than two fixed categories of "men" and "women" and that "gender identity and sexual identity and expression may be more fluid and plural in forms."[46] . Moreover, it is indispensable that a European FFP is aware of and addresses the European colonial history and its impact on current power asymmetries in international relations and gendered social structures, including by adopting a post-colonial approach in its relations with partners. The EU should recognize its historical legacy as an imperialist power and start to debate issues of power asymmetries and colonial legacies internally and how existing policies might be reproducing them, intending to change policies and practices that only reinforce unjust and unequal relations.

46 Citation retrieved from Friesen, I., & Wisskirchen, A. (2022). ***Ten recommendations for Germany's feminist development policy*** (IDOS Discussion Paper 17/2022). Bonn: German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS). https://doi.org/10.23661/idp17.2022

2 REFORM EU INSTITUTIONS TOWARDS EQUAL COMPOSITION, MORE INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES, AND INCREASED DIALOGUE WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

Structural reforms of EU institutions dealing with foreign affairs are necessary, particularly cultural and institutional changes aiming at a more balanced composition of decision-making bodies, which incentivize the presence of women in office, and that lead to the adoption of more participatory and inclusive processes of decision-making. Furthermore, the EU must put in place a mechanism of listening to the stories and perspectives of women and all subaltern groups to reflect on one's privileged position and responsibilities within the global community. One way to do this is, for instance, by working closely with feminist and civil society organizations and by financing such organizations to integrate their perspectives and needs in the policy conceptualization and implementation levels, as suggested by Friesen and Wisskirchen (2022)[47]. Additionally, considering many practices of feminist foreign policy already adopted at the level of member states, the EU should actively foster FFP networks at the European level by promoting spaces for the exchange of best practices and their consolidation and policy diffusion.

3 INCREASE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL POLICY COHERENCE BY ADOPTING FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ACROSS FOREIGN POLICY DOMAINS, ALLOCATING ADEQUATE RESOURCES, AND MAINSTREAMING GENDER

A true FFP requires decisive action to address the domestic dimension of gender equality. The GAP III already mentioned the need for the EU to lead by example and this means that the EU should first and foremost fight discrimination and promote gender equality, justice, and inclusion internally, in its societies, member states, and institutions. For that, the EU should not only set gender objectives for its joint external action but also incentivize member states to achieve such objectives in their bilateral external action. In addition, addressing gender inequalities requires financial commitments that reflect the respective priorities and gender awareness and goals across all external policies. In that sense, there should be coherence between the adoption of gender equality targets and objectives in all fields of external policies, as well as in internal policies.

4 FOR AN EU BLUEPRINT FOR FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY 2.0

Considering the wide variety of interpretations due to the lack of an overarching understanding of what constitutes a FFP approach, the EU can act as a catalyst to design a coherent and solid framework for a more cohesive intersectional feminist foreign policy approach at the EU level revolving around the five key elements: purpose, definition, reach, intended outcomes/benchmarks and operationalization plan.[48] On the one hand, the EU could help to rethink feminist foreign and domestic policy as two sides of the same coin by ensuring greater complementarity between its action in equality and foreign policy fields. On the other hand, the Europeanisation of FFP can act as a uniting factor seeking to overcome ideological and political division by bolstering a shared approach around commonly shared values based on peace, solidarity, human rights, and equality. To overcome the "depoliticization/politicization

47 https://www.idos-research.de/uploads/media/DP_17.2022.pdf

48 Thompson, Lyric, Gayatri Patel, Gawain Kripke, and Megan O'Donnell. 2020. Toward a Feminist Foreign Policy in the United States. Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women, Accessed on November 29, 2022, https://genderandsecurity.org/projects-resources/research/toward-feminist-foreign-policy-united-states

4

paradox" inherent to FFP[49], the EU must endeavor to disentangle gender equality from its current misuses to refocus it on the original and more ambitious political project of feminism: uncover power structures and promote transformation. Concretely speaking, the EU should use all its means to gain more direct ownership of FFP, bringing it to a new level while taking advantage of its normative power in international relations to share good practices of FFP.

49 Cadesky, Jessica. "Built on shaky ground: Reflections on Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy." ***International Journal***, (2020). Accessed November 30, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020702020953424.

APPENDIX

TABLE 1
Timeline of Feminist Foreign Policy

Year	country	Policy agenda	Stage of implementation
2014	Sweden	1st (*) Feminist Foreign Policy	Entered into force as the very first explicit FFP (*) but no longer in place since the formation of the new Government in 2022.
2015	Norway	Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Foreign and Development Policy (2007-2009, extended for 2010-2013; 2016-2020) Government Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security (2019-2022)	Successive national action plans in place.
2018	UK	A feminist approach to development (UK Labour) Commitment to a feminist foreign policy (UK Women's Equality Party)	Party-level commitment to a feminist approach to foreign policy.
2017	**Canada**	**Feminist International Assistance Policy (2017)**	In implementation.
2018	**France**	**Feminist Diplomacy**	In implementation.
2019	**Mexico**	**Feminist Foreign Policy**	In implementation.
2020	Hawaii	Feminist Economic Recovery Plan for Covid-19	In implementation.
2021	**Spain**	**Feminist Foreign Policy**	In implementation.
2021	**Luxemburg**	**Feminist Foreign Policy**	In implementation.
2021	Libya	Feminist Foreign Policy (announcement)	Announcement made in July.
2021	**Germany**	**Feminist Foreign Policy**	**Guidelines presented on 01/03/2023 following the Government coalition agreement of 2022.**
2022	Scotland	A Feminist Approach to Foreign Policy	Under development in consultation with key stakeholders. Next step: policy statement underpinned by action plan.
2022	**Chile**	**Feminist Foreign Policy**	**Under development.**
2022	**Netherlands**	**Feminist Foreign Policy**	**Broad consultations will be held to ensure the meaningful development of the Netherlands' FFP.[50]**

50 Government of the Netherlands, Letter of May 13 2022 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation to the Senate on the added value for the Netherlands of a feminist foreign policy, May 17 2022, accessed on November 30 2022, https://www.government.nl/documents/letters/2022/05/17/letter-on-the-added-value-for-the-netherlands-of-a-feminist-foreign-policy

TABLE 2
Key Principles of FFP[50]

	INTERNAL AND PROCESS MEASURES	EXTERNAL AND OUTCOME MEASURES	ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES
RIGHTS	■ Internal policies and protections to advance gender equality (e.g. paid leave, sexual and gender-based violence and discrimination protections	■ Improvement of LGBTQI+, women's, indigenous/ minority, disability, youth/aging rights standards at global, regional, national and state levels ■ Advancement of rights most under attack ■ (sexual and reproductive health and rights including LGBTQI+ and safe abortion; environmental and climate commitments) ■ Explicit support for women's human rights and LGBTQI+ rights defenders Protection of and support for women peacebuilders	■ Gender equality specific: ■ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women ■ Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action ■ UNSCR 1325 ■ Regional agreements (Maputo Protocol, Istanbul Convention, etc.) **General:** ■ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development/SDGs ■ Universal Declaration on Human Rights ■ Human Rights Council (incl. Special 6 Procedures, Gender Office)• Trade dispute mechanisms
RESOURCES	■ Percent increase investment in domestic and foreign affairs budgets/staffing ■ Flexible funding ■ Gender Budgeting	■ Increasing support for feminist organizations ■ Increasing control of funds by feminist funders	■ OECD DAC gender marker – 20/100 principal/significant ■ External validation for all self-reported metrics ■ Training on applying a gender equality approach to international policies and program

51 Source: Thompson, Lyric, Gayatri Patel, Gawain Kripke, and Megan O'Donnell. 2020. Toward a Feminist Foreign Policy in the United States. Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women, Accessed on November 29, 2022, https://genderandsecurity.org/projects-resources/research/toward-feminist-foreign-policy-united-states

	INTERNAL AND PROCESS MEASURES	EXTERNAL AND OUTCOME MEASURES	ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES
REPRESENTATION	■ Number of minority ministers, deputies, ambassadors ■ Percent increase in gender advisors ■ Parity at all staff levels ■ Inclusion of feminist civil society in the process of policy-making, implementation, evaluation	■ Co-creation of feminist policies, programs with civil society ■ Increased numbers of minorities in social, economic and political leadership roles	■ Quotas (at home and abroad) ■ Parity pledges ■ Implementation of the GAPS UK consultation process
RESEARCH & REPORTING	■ Monitoring and evaluation for the impact and uptake of internal policies ■ Rigorous and independent impact evaluations	■ Investments and policy decisions are rooted in rigorous evidence across all streams of FFP	■ Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound or "SMART" indicators ■ Public, independent and outcomes-based reporting on impact of FFP annually ■ Use of feminist evaluation techniques
REACH	■ Horizontal integration of gender-responsive measures by applying a gender lens to all policies and programs ■ Coherence across aid, trade, defense, diplomacy	■ Mirror priorities in domestic and foreign policies ■ Embrace of intersectionality in focus areas and approach	■ Clear definition of FF ■ Stated SMART goals for the policy · Benchmarks over time

REPORT

FEBRUARY 2023

A DECOLONIAL, FEMINIST APPROACH TO DIGITAL ETHICS AND GOVERNANCE

Aarathi Krishnan

MESSAGE TO READERS

New technologies and the increasing sophistication of information technologies can have two conflicting impacts. On the one hand, it can open access and democratize information and communication in real time. Still, it can exert violence and harassment, especially against women.

Social media platforms have become indispensable after a pandemic accelerated the virtualization of political debates. Unfortunately, though these platforms might seem powerful tools to amplify women's participation in politics and public life, social media has transformed into a toxic space where politically active individuals, especially women, face online harassment and abuse.

Female politicians and, in general, women that have a public life face online violence daily, including insults and hate speech, embarrassment and reputational risk, physical threats, and sexualized misrepresentation.

Online gender-based violence is a scary manifestation affecting women's empowerment and represents a serious menace to the core of our political systems. On the one hand, women self-censor, minimizing their political speech and online activity to avoid attacks. But on the other hand, oppressive and authoritarian actors use this tainted tactic to intimidate women and girls who are politically active.

A global survey conducted with over 26,000 adolescent girls and young women across 33 countries showed that one in 4 participants feels less confident to share their views online, and one in 5 has stopped engaging in political or current affairs on online platforms. These statistics show that violence on social media effectively deprives women and girls of their right to express their political opinion freely, get involved in decision-making, and ultimately become leaders of their communities.

Global Governance Innovation Network

COALITION for the UN WE NEED

Bahá'í International Community

WE DO

Under the current circumstances, the struggle to promote women's political participation is incrementally long and tortuous. According to UN Women, after the pandemic, we will have to wait at least 140 years to achieve gender parity in positions of power and leadership in the workplace and at least 40 years to achieve equal representation in national parliaments.

There are already too many battlefields in the different levels of government and decision-making to add one more, such as the digital environment, to the spaces where women are forced to claim their place and make their voices heard.

GWL Voices works to raise awareness of gender-based violence in the digital space, where it appears as if the law of the jungle prevails. Faced with online gender-based violence, we cannot remain silent because our political participation is at risk solely because we are women, a prejudice rooted in the dominant political structure and replicated as if it were natural on social media platforms and all over the internet.

This report represents our collective stance on an issue needing immediate action. It provides an opportunity for reflection and serves as a call to action to elevate the protection of women at all levels of society.

We want to thank our partners, GGIN, C4UN, and WEDO, whose foresight and support have enabled us to carry out this critical work.

Here's to elevating our voices for change and inclusion while advancing the issues we care about most.

#GWL VOICES FOR CHANGE & INCLUSION

AUTHOR

Aarathi Krishnan

Affiliate - Berkman Klein Centre for Internet and Society, Harvard University. 2020-2022 Tech and Human Rights Fellow - Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, Harvard Kennedy School

Like the technical architecture of classic colonialism, digital colonialism is rooted in the design of a tech ecosystem for the purposes of profit and plunder. If the railways and maritime trade routes were the "open veins" of the Global South back then, today, digital infrastructure takes on the same role: extraction of data gleaned from the streams of information given up as residents of all countries go online, register for state benefits, and connect with one another through applications whose terms of service demand they give up their personal and private information.

Digital futures are not neutral—nor are those that advocate for its expansion or its mitigation, neutral either. There are complex reasons behind this. Digital systems exist within complex imperial formations. As communications studies scholar Paula Chakravartty (Gallatin School of Individualized Study, n.d.) suggests in her studies of new media and racial capitalism, these are all interlocking formations, built on imperial rivalries and a tech worldview that imagines some figures—especially the migrant working classes of the Global South—as outside the world of tech itself. Like the technical architecture of classic colonialism, digital colonialism is rooted in the design of a tech ecosystem for the purposes of profit and plunder. If the railways and maritime trade routes were the "open veins" of the Global South back then, today, digital infrastructure takes on the same role: extraction of data gleaned from the streams of information given up as residents of all countries go online, register for state benefits, and connect with one another through applications whose terms of service demand they give up their personal and private information. As Mohamed, Png and Isaac argue, "the coloniality of power can be observed in digital structures in the form of socio-cultural imaginations, knowledge systems, and way of developing and using technology which are based on systems, institutions and values that persist from the past and remain unquestioned in the present"[1].

The act of colonialism, or colonization, removes power from the colonized, dispossesses and transfers economic resources, and removes culture in the name of 'civility.' Coloniality presents itself in a matrix of power that operates through control or hegemony over the economy,

1 Mohamed, Png & Isaac (2020), *Decolonial AI: Decolonial Theory as Socio-Technical Foresight in Artificial Intelligence, Philosophy and Technology* (405)

including land, labour, and natural resources; authority; gender and sexuality; and subjectivity and knowledge. Coloniality was presented to the world as 'modernization' but this was at grave expense to freedom, justice, equality, and a homogenous world view. The ideas of modernity that resulted come because of this domination. How we then conceive and transfer knowledge, as well as what knowledge we see as credible and valid are also based on these colonial beliefs. How we exist within these structures and how we interpret reality is deeply influenced by colonization as well. Digital colonialism isn't the only privileging force that digital systems sometimes uphold. It can also uphold forces like *patriarchy, race and ethnicity bias, paternalism, hetero/cis normativity, classism and class privilege, caste privilege, ableism and ageism.*

The concerns of the biases of AI and digital systems on populations are slowly getting traction. Some governments are moving to simultaneously limit the power of tech companies with an 'urgency and breadth that no single industry has experienced before'[2]. Technology firms are working to embed tech ethics into their ways of working, though this hasn't been without controversy or notions of ethics washing. Campaigns to ban specific technologies that disproportionately harm marginalised and historically oppressed communities are getting traction (i.e. facial recognition technologies in policing), **however this hasn't quite in equal ways globally**.

How we exist within these structures and how we interpret reality is deeply influenced by colonization as well. Digital colonialism isn't the only privileging force that digital systems sometimes uphold. It can also uphold forces *like patriarchy, race and ethnicity bias, paternalism, hetero/cis normativity, classism and class privilege, caste privilege, ableism and ageism*.

As it stands today, digital democratisation is fundamentally flawed as it "predicated on a future where soon everyone will have a personal internet connection, a social media account, and therefore will be able to create content and collectively engage online" (Kaurin, 2021). Digital tools for diverse communities are designed based on the assumption that local communities ought to meet on the platforms that international organisations are familiar with, rather than localising technology tools to be more easily accessible – i.e., translated into local languages, designing UX for diversity and for use in places with slower WiFI and poorer telecom

2 https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/20/technology/global-tipping-point-tech.html

infrastructures[3]. Supporting this is the argument that scholars and civil society organisations tend to present – that the use of data technologies as harm-inducing techno-solutionism or techno-colonialism"[4].

In addition, the **values assigned to what determines complex principles such as rights, fairness, and privacy do not necessarily consider the cultural contexts** that those values and principles are being applied to. The right to privacy for example, has been one that has "historically been most difficult to define in a legal framework, due to not only its roots in cultural rituals, but also changing societal and political norms"[5]. Salil Shetty, former Secretary General of Amnesty International, said this of human rights: "human rights often mean different things to different people. And they don't mean anything at all for a good number of people in the developing world". Shetty further argues that "colonialism, and early, modern-day human rights fed upon each other…the development and flourishing of the institution of international law itself – with its definition and consolidation of the notions of sovereignty, statehood, trusteeship, and protection – become inextricably linked to the colonial project". By only continuing to draw on normative frameworks and definitions of these values and principles, it ensures that Western homogeneous definitions of privacy or the rights to be left alone, end up being imposed down on other cultures.

The fast evolution of AI technology amplifies the risks it brings with it. The confinement and risk to vulnerable people is happening at speed, meaning it is harder to seek justice. Digital technologies and AI mask ideologies of power and are wed to a market ideology of dominance. To intentionally carve a different type of ideology would require governance systems that are informed by different knowledge sources that tangibly influence decision making and that prioritise a focus not just on the firefighting of today but rather the implications on future generations.

3 Kaurin, D., *Tech Localisation: Why the localisation of aid requires the localisation of technology*, CDAC Network Annual Forum, 2021

4 Weitzberg, Cheeseman, & Martin (2021), *Between surveillance and recognition, Rethinking digital identity in aid*, Big Data & Society, Sage Pub: https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517211006744

5 Kaurin, D., *Data Protection and Digital Protection for Refugees*, World Refugee Council Research Paper Series, 2019: https://www.cigionline.org/publications/data-protection-and-digital-agency-refugees/

GOVERNING DIGITAL SYSTEMS

An incredible amount of work has gone into establishing data governance protocols that have just shifted how organisations think about data. This ranges from the work being led by the OCHA's Centre of Humanitarian Data on Data Responsibility, UNDGs Guidance Note on Data Privacy, Ethics and Protection, and numerous others. Emerging areas of research on AI and Human Rights are calling for a human rights centred approach to AI Governance. The UN Report on Roadmap for Digital Cooperation goes further into issues of digital public goods, digital cooperation, and digital human rights and points out that "developing countries are largely absent from or not well-represented in most prominent forums on artificial intelligence..." and that "current artificial intelligence-related initiatives lack overall coordination in a way that is easily accessible to other countries outside the existing groupings, other United Nations entities and other stakeholders...and without a broader, more systematic attempt to harness the potential and mitigate the risk of artificial intelligence, opportunities to use it for the public good are being missed"[6]. UNESCO's AI Decision Maker's Toolkit (2019) aims to elaborate a standard setting instrument on ethics of AI drawing on elements of trends, recommendations, implementation guides and capability building resources for the development of a human rights-based and ethical AI[7].

In addition to this, are questions of immunity (traditionally, institutions - multilateral or otherwise - do not go beyond the individual institutional governance mechanisms, that often are bordered by the institution's immunity); and appropriateness of the technology innovations we deploy.

The commonality across all these protocols as it exists today, is that it **narrows** the focus of governance on issues such as data and AI, rather than the broader governance of the use of digital systems **within the systems it intersects with.** Pizzi, Romanoff and Engelhardt (2021) argue that current *codes* of ethics are limited in that they are "not binding, like law and hence

6 Roadmap for Digital Cooperation (2020), United Nations: https://www.un.org/en/content/digital-cooperation-roadmap/assets/pdf/Roadmap_for_Digital_Cooperation_EN.pdf

7 https://en.unesco.org/artificial-intelligence/decision-makers-toolkit

do not promulgate compliance; they often reflect the values of the organisation that created them, rather than the diversity of those potentially impacted by AI systems; and they are not automatically operationalized by those designing and applying AI tools on a daily basis"[8]. In addition to this, are questions of **immunity** (traditionally, institutions - multilateral or otherwise - do not go beyond the individual institutional governance mechanisms, that often are bordered by the institution's immunity); and **appropriateness** of the technology innovations we deploy. More urgently, what weaves these protocols together is its focus on the *now* and its *homogeneity* - from how we understand harm, protection, human rights, and ethics solutions, and then **what the potential implications might be in the future on impacted populations.**

Operationalising this approach requires clear pathways to how it influences decision making and accountability – as without these, it is merely side-lined to tokenistic gestures of 'inclusion' that continue to affirm power as it looks like today in a status quo that arguably is not fit for the future.

The fast evolution of AI technology amplifies the risks it brings with it. The confinement and risk to vulnerable people is happening at speed, meaning it is harder to seek justice. Digital technologies and AI mask ideologies of power and are wed to a market ideology of dominance. To intentionally carve a different type of ideology would require governance systems that are informed by different knowledge sources that tangibly **influence** decision making and that **prioritise a focus not just on the firefighting of today but rather the implications on future generations.** Kaurin (2021) argues, "digital spaces are representative of ontic spaces; the same challenges regarding gender, age, ableism and discrimination that prevent diverse and representative engagement on the ground are replicated online"[9].

8 Pizzi, Romanoff and Engelhardt (2021), *AI for humanitarian action: Human rights and ethics,* Cambridge University Press.

9 Kaurin, ibid.

REIMAGINED DIGITAL ETHICS AND GOVERNANCE

This brief posits a digital ethics and governance framework that specifically aims at interrogating and analysing *context, motives, and impact* of use over a long-term time frame. This focus is to enable safeguards to be built-in to ensure a broader accountability to public interest as well as ensure that practices and frameworks do not advertently or inadvertently obstruct peoples current *and new* rights (new rights draw on the argument that rights are neither static nor immutable, and any efforts to design equitable, flourishing futures must consider entirely new forms of harms and rights[10] to be effective.

An incredible amount of work has gone into establishing data governance protocols that have just shifted how organisations think about data.

Ethics and governance models that are baselined in decolonial theory interrogates patterns of power that shape our intellectual, political, economic, and social world. Our models of governance and strategic design, require a broader evolution to consider the "sexual, gender, spiritual, epistemic, economic, political, linguistic, aesthetic, pedagogical and racial hierarchies of the "modern/colonial western-centric Christian-centric capitalist/patriarchal world-system"[11]. By embedding a decolonial critical approach within the technical practice of ethical and governance practice, digital systems can ensure that the impacts of these systems can amplify impacted populations' ability to flourish in the long term, rather than just to survive in the short term.

The commonality across all these protocols as it exists today, is that it narrows the focus of governance on issues such as data and AI, rather than the broader governance of the use of digital systems within the systems it intersects with.

10 Raman & Schultz, The Coming Good Society: Why New Realities Demand New Rights, Harvard University Press, 2020

11 Grosfoguel, Ramón; https://dialogoglobal.com/texts/grosfoguel/Grosfoguel-Decolonizing-Pol-Econ-and-Postcolonial.pdf

What the framework aims, is to ensure the following principles are imbued into the use and deployment of digital systems:

- **Positionality:** That *who* holds the responsibility for developing governance, ethics, protocols, and standards of use and deployment consider the positionality of the authorship and decision making within their wider metropolis, and assess the impacts any biases or privileges that that gives rise to
- **Future Impacts and Harm Assessment:** The organisations deploying these systems include an expansion on a range of criteria for assessment including plausible, possible, and probable future harms and impacts that might arise on impacted populations and on their future generations. This involves going beyond assessments to ensure that something is used only within its prescribed intent, but rather to assess function creep[12] current and into the future.
- **Plurality in Legitimacy:** Utilising a wider range of knowledge sources and experiences to legitimize a multiplicity of conceptual models related to 'ethics' and 'fairness' to ensure assessments and conclusions drawn, intentionally do not replicate an echo-chamber worldview via a limited homogenous perspective that do not account for normative and cultural realities.
- **Reverse Accountability against Meaningless Consent:** Ensuring that accountability mechanisms are designed to hold institutions to account so that the burden of harm is not continuously placed on impacted peoples. Specifically, this applies to issues of meaningless consent[13] where reverse accountability can provide redress and ensures institutions bear the costs when ethical principles are violated.
- **Beyond Empowerment and Inclusion:** Moving beyond just 'diversity and inclusion' as a metric for mitigating bias, but ensuring clear, transparent mechanisms that ensure the inclusion of historically excluded, impacted populations can *influence* decision making and provide a re-weighting of decision-making priorities.
- **Relational Ethics[14]:** Assessing patterns across a wider range of contextual social, technical, economic, and historical systems, norms, and structures to understand *why* rather than merely designing technical solutions and systems blindly.
- **Transparent Privilege and Dispossession:** Assessing whose rights are privileged and whose are dispossessed in decision making, and the risk of that weighting in the short term and long-term time horizon.
- **Objective Truth v Constructed Representation:** Ensuring governance systems are utilised to recognise the *context* digital systems will exist in as opposed to a singular representation at a specific point in time[15], to design malleability and adaptability in changing contexts over time

Operationalising this approach requires clear pathways to how it influences *decision making and accountability* - as without these, it is merely side-lined to tokenistic gestures of 'inclusion' that continue to affirm power as it looks like today in a status quo that arguably is not fit for

12 Wright and Verity, ibid
13 Wright and Verity, ibid.
14 Birhane, ibid.
15 McDonald, S; ibid.

the future. As Ahmed Ansari argues "the whole project of democratically-decided AI futures is a cover for essentially continued Anglo-European coloniality and re-asserting global white supremacy because mere representation doesn't necessarily equate to radical alterity"[16].

By embedding a decolonial critical approach within the technical practice of ethical and governance practice, digital systems can ensure that the impacts of these systems can amplify impacted populations' ability to flourish in the long term, rather than just to survive in the short term.

Radical alterity in this sense, is the collective responsibility of all humanitarian actors to not just expect dehumanizing resilience as a coping mechanisms for impacted populations to just deal with whatever might come from digital systems in their futures, but rather to radically work towards mitigating and designing systems that don't just say 'we leave no one behind' but rather very intentionally designing through justice, equity and resistance to never do so.

16 https://medium.com/a-new-ai-lexicon/a-new-ai-lexicon-modernity-coloniality-7f6979ffbe82

REPORT
FEBRUARY 2023

“DUE TO BUDGETARY LIMITATIONS…”:

A Policy Brief for Feminist, Sustainable and Youth-Focused Funding and Resourcing under Our Common Agenda

İnlayda Eskitaşçıoğlu

MESSAGE TO READERS

GWL Voices, our advocacy, pushes for the inclusion of women's voices in all spheres of society, particularly in peace and security, global governance, human rights, gender issues, international peace and security, environmental diplomacy, global health, and sustainable development.

Hence, as a collective voice of women's leadership, backed by the support of our partners, this report reflects our stance on an issue whose time is long overdue.

In the wake of unending global challenges, providing adequate resources for feminist youth activists and grassroots feminist organizations will ensure their full participation and enhance their contribution to shaping global issues.

We want to thank our partners, GGIN, C4UN, and WEDO, whose foresight and support have enabled us to carry out this critical work.

Here's to elevating our voices for change and inclusion while advancing the issues we care about most.

#GWL VOICES FOR CHANGE & INCLUSION

AUTHOR

İlayda Eskitaşçıoğlu

İlayda Eskitaşcioğlu is an award-winning feminist youth activist, human rights lawyer and a Ph.D. student researching international human rights law at Koç University in Istanbul, Turkey. She is an attorney-at-law at Ankara Bar Association and a fellow at the Koç University UNESCO Chair for Gender Equality and Sustainable Development. She is the co-founder of We Need to Talk, an NGO which aims to fight against period poverty and menstruation stigma in Turkey, which was selected as one of Turkey's Changemaker organizations and has reached out to more than 80.000 menstruators since 2016. She has served as a member of the Generation Equality Youth Task Force (formerly known as Beijing+25 Youth Task Force) led by UN Women and was selected as one of the 17 Young Leaders for Sustainable Development Goals, endorsed by the United Nations. Alongside her activism on menstrual justice and sexual and reproductive health and rights, her academic research expertise is on business and human rights. She is currently writing her PhD thesis on a triple comparison between the business and human rights mechanisms available in Turkey, Colombia and South Africa from a feminist legal theory lens, analysing the accessibility and gender-responsiveness of these mechanisms for women workers in value chains. She is the chairperson of the Turkish Impact Council (IMPACT 2030) Youth Committee. She is an international consultant at the UN Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, supporting the regional efforts for meaningful youth participation in decision-making and youth mobilization.

Dependency on funding increases as young people are only provided opportunities with (and therefore pushed to) when they deliver projects meeting expectations of funders and producing pre-determined outcomes envisioned by the funders. Dependency on short-term and non-sustainable funding increases as the number of tasks and committed projects increase while there is no time or opportunity left for increasing capacity. This eventually causes pushing the limits of shrinking resources with an expanding workload.

Our Common Agenda is "an agenda of action designed to accelerate the implementation of existing agreements, including the Sustainable Development Goals" including key proposals across the 12 commitments from the Declaration on the Commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations and proposed key moments.

A few among the addressed topics are prominent: the renewed social contract with a focus on inclusion, participation and protection, especially of women and girls; a significantly strong commitment for solidarity with younger generations and youth leadership, marked with the successful establishment of the United Nations Youth Office with the unanimous GA Resolution A/76/L.85[1]; and an understanding of networked, inclusive and effective multilateralism with an increased role for and influence of private sector. This policy brief aims to compile and summarize an analysis of Our Common Agenda Report with regard to the listed above aspects focusing on a crucial, specific issue. This issue has been repeatedly voiced by feminist and youth stakeholders yet has not been adequately addressed at the UN political arena: gender-responsive, sustainable and youth-focused funding and resourcing. The analysis and recommendations in this policy brief is informed, among others, by global consensus documents such as the Beijing Platform for Action; CEDAW; the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN Youth Strategy Youth 2030; barriers faced and lessons learned from the collective efforts of grassroots feminist youth activists throughout the Generation Equality Youth Journey, the Young Feminist Manifesto crafted by youth constituencies throughout this process.

1 https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/587/26/PDF/N2258726.pdf?OpenElement

"LISTENING TO AND WORKING WITH YOUTH" REQUIRES CORE, FLEXIBLE, NEED-BASED FUNDING

Representation, active and inclusive participation and meaningful engagement of youth, women and girls is clearly prioritized especially under the key proposals "placing women and girls at the center" and "listening to and working with youth." Lack of resources and funding which feminist youth activists and grassroots feminist organizations often experience is the main source of power imbalance and undermines the active, substantive and meaningful participation of these groups. Specifically young feminists are often expected to attend meetings with various UN entities and public events and dedicate their limited time and resources to provide input for working documents. Underfunded grassroots local feminist organizations, adolescent girls and youth from underrepresented constituencies often push their resources to the limit in order to sustain their engagement and eventually disengage from long-term political processes due to burnout or running out of resources.

These priorities can only be actualized if a significant proportion of funding is directly provided to youth, as the subjects and agents of change. Youth constituencies should be supported through core, flexible and responsive funding to support their self-identified needs, and to strenghten their capacities without the expectation of project-based outcomes and outputs.

Secretary General's vision for meaningful, diverse and affective youth engagement covers both within and outside the United Nations, which is applaudable, and the focus is on better political representation, transforming education, skills, training and lifelong learning. These priorities can only be actualized if a significant proportion of funding is directly provided to youth, as the subjects and agents of change. Youth constituencies should be supported through core, flexible and responsive funding to support their self-identified needs, and to strenghten their capacities without the expectation of project-based outcomes and outputs. Funding opportunities should be designed for capacity-building based on self-identified

needs (hiring youth activists, supporting cost of utilities and digital memberships, investing in learning and skill-building programmes) and not on pre-determined and assumed needs. Currently, a majority of funding opportunities are exclusively focused on projects with relatively visible and measurable outcomes. Dependency on funding increases as young people are only provided opportunities with (and therefore pushed to) when they deliver projects meeting expectations of funders and producing pre-determined outcomes envisioned by the funders. Dependency on short-term and non-sustainable funding increases as the number of tasks and committed projects increase while there is no time or opportunity left for increasing capacity. This eventually causes pushing the limits of shrinking resources with an expanding workload.

Through detailed research and due diligence, background checks, by building safe and sustainable accountability and regular reporting mechanisms, and by keeping in regular, close contact with grantee youth organizations, funders can ensure that their funds will be used in line with the purpose of the grant to create impact.

Through detailed research and due diligence, background checks, by building safe and sustainable accountability and regular reporting mechanisms, and by keeping in regular, close contact with grantee youth organizations, funders can ensure that their funds will be used in line with the purpose of the grant to create impact. Instead of pushing for relatively more measurable and visible outputs (i.e., for a youth organization working on period poverty, this expected outcome would be a high number of hygiene kits distributed) which tend to have short-term impact for beneficiaries, these funds should primarily support movement building or transformation of current spaces towards youth-friendly spaces that can serve their purpose better (i.e. for the same organization these more impactful investments would be long-term training of trainers, toolkits and travel funds for lobbying activities at local governements, establishing a sustainable donation system for sanitary products, creating youth-focused safe spaces for honest conversations). The Young Feminist Fund,[2] led by FRIDA, can be listed among best practices: their use of participatory grantmaking models, the availability of flexible fund for core support allow grantee young feminists to define their budgets, use funds based on their needs, and provides space to listen to the changing demands of communities, to adapt and to respond, instead of putting young feminists in an imbalanced power dynamic or pushing them to stick strictly to their submitted initial plans. The diverse categories of support they offer, not only limited to core funding support, but also special funding, an accompaniment program designed to create a feminist solidarity model and to strengthen communication, online learning programs and regional and global convenings, are among good examples for diversified and flexible ways of resourcing young feminists.

2 https://youngfeministfund.org/

Commitment to meaningful youth engagement and intergenerational solidarity requires young individuals, activists, collectives and youth-led organizations to be recognized and compensated for their time, effort and expertise. As abovementioned, while monetary compensation, grants and funds are of great value, young people demand their efforts to be also recognized through offering learning opportunities, trainings, education (which can be documented or certified for career prospects), and opportunities for internship and mentorship.[3] These forms of skill-based, non-monetary resourcing is in line with Our Common Agenda's focus on creation of green and digital economy jobs, and an improvement in labour market for youth. Resourcing young feminists is equal parts about providing monetary support and remuneration, and equal parts about skill-building. Youth constituencies have often struggled between both extreme ends: On one side, they have been provided with rigid funds with a pre-determined agenda and strict rules and they have been expected to oblige to the demands of the funder due to imbalanced power dynamics. On the other hand, they have been provided with skill-building workshops and toolkits with inadequate content, designed and implemented with a top-down approach which do not fulfill their needs, and expected to accept these programs as renumeration, or a learning experience for their future careers. Finding a balance among these two kinds of resourcing and improving their quality should be the way forwat for youth-focused funding under Our Common Agenda.

Underfunded grassroots local feminist organizations, adolescent girls and youth from underrepresented constituencies often push their resources to the limit in order to sustain their engagement and eventually disengage from long-term political processes due to burnout or running out of resources.

3 https://www.mamacash.org/media/publications/girlstothefront_report_web.pdf

FROM BETWEEN FORMS, BANK STATEMENTS, AND BUREAUCRATIC STEPS

Paperwork and bureaucratic workload for receiving funds (even individual grants for one-time/short term participatory events) as well as eligibility criteria should be simplified. While the need for documentation is understandable, national and regional UN entities should be able to provide seed-funding or individual funding to support and "work with" youth activists, as envisioned under Our Common Agenda. Currently, in order to receive small grants or funds, or to be compensated for their work, young people are expected to fill and submit P11 (personal history) forms, Consultant and Individual Contractor Personal Status Profiles, and bank-issued proofs of bank accounts. These kinds of detailed documents may be needed for hiring procedures, however, due to the requirements of financial departments, these documents are also often required when young people are receiving individual grants or are compensated for their short-term work. Young people might not have bank accounts, might not have access to international financial mechanisms (due to the limited capacity of banking systems in their communities/where they are based), or may not be able to provide invoices since they do not own or are not affiliated with a company. Similarly, for non-profit organizations, providing invoices can be challenging. Alternatives, such as availability of payment in person, and documentation systems, such as expense vouchers, donation receipts, or individually signed declarations should be available at the in certain local, national and regional events, if not at large-scale global events.

Accountability can be ensured by strong communication and reporting. However, when funds are provided and a majority of crucial decisions are controlled (agenda, language, list of participants), it is difficult to speak of youth co-leadership, and the events turn out to be youth-focused, not youth-led.

Many international gatherings and conferences crucial for effective lobbying and networking are only open to the participation of legally registered, large-scale civil society organizations with recognized status. For example, only ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations are able to attend Commission on the Status of Women and youth activists often find themselves reaching out to the accredited NGOs and negotiating with them to be inlcuded within their list of representatives. Initiatives and platforms led by youth often lack legal personalities, let alone

ECOSOC accreditation. While supportive NGOs with such accreditation are often in solidarity with youth and provide support with regard to access to registration, young people often have to search for funding for in-person participation. A significant increase in campaigns started by youth activists from low-income countries, as well as youth organizations with hopes to cover travel and accomodation costs to attend international United Nations conferences, such as COP27 in 2022[4], is a clear example of how youth participation should be prioritized by feminist and youth-focused funding.

Lack of resources and funding which feminist youth activists and grassroots feminist organizations often experience is the main source of power imbalance and undermines the active, substantive and meaningful participation of these groups.

When youth organizations do have a legal status and are selected for a grant, they are expected to provide detailed and certified financial audit reports, Rules of Governance, proof of legal status provided only by certain institutions etc. Youth organizations with legal status are often expected to act as intermediary organizations in order to fund young individuals who may not be affiliated with them. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's invidiual funding for the members of Generation Equality Youth Task Force provides an example for such challenging cases. Transfer of the provided funds to youth task force members were delayed significantly, because an intermediary organization was first needed to distribute the funds. After a long and detailed selection process, an intermediary non-profit organization was appointed for the distribution of funds, which then had to withdraw due to limited capacity, and each youth task force member was individually provided with funds by the UN Women HQ. Although Youth Task Force members' activism work was eventually supported by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's generous donation with the strong support of UN Women team, the process was unexpectedly delayed despite the hardwork and commitment of all parties, causing an intense workload both for the Youth Task Force members (doing uncompensated work for searching, selecting and communicating with intermediary organization) as well as United Nations teams, who are often understaffed. Young individuals and youth organizations are often required to provide many documents and go through heavy paperwork, which surpass their capacity or require intense time and effort. Our Common Agenda addresses crucial points with regard to working with young people, as well as financial obligations, yet it does not address the need for simplifying financial and bureaucratic processes to make (often vital) funding more accessible to youth and other underrepresented and vulnerable constituencies.

4 https://www.gofundme.com/s?q=cop27

"TICKETS" FOR SEATS AT THE TABLE: ACCESS TO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

While the proposed actions under Our Common Agenda on solidarity with youth and future generations are promising, they solely focus on the establishment of new structures and mechanisms. The underfunding problem with regard to youth mobilization and the need to support youth leadership with financing and tangible resources are not mentioned under Chapter III. Instead of channeling resources and momentum exclusively to the new institutions envisioned under Our Common Agenda; United Nations' funding system should be improved structurally. There has been a constant production and publishing of online toolkits, reports and short-term online workshops focused on capacity building. While young people are more often invited to and included within online consultations before major political gatherings such as CSW or HLPF, once inputs and feedback are collected, the consultation organizers rarely get

Finding a balance among these two kinds of resourcing and improving their quality should be the way forwat for youth-focused funding under Our Common Agenda.

back to youth constituencies with results or actual proof that their inputs were integrated within policies or statements. On one hand, active engagement in online consultations require time, energy and resources for young people (although more accessible, as expressed within one youth activism circle, "contrary to popular belief, online participation is not without cost"). On the other hand, during the recovery from COVID19 pandemic, effective discussions with concrete results, negotiations and policy making are often done in-person, within rooms where young people are very underrepresented. The organization committees of high level political events should prioritize funding for youth representatives' participation, and the capacity and commitment to fund youth participation should be a criteria to be taken into consideration while building partnerhsips with private sector or sponsorship contracts for the organization of large-scale conferences. Creating a funding quota for the participation of youth representatives to be provided by private sector partners based on their financial capacity could be an innovative solution. Women's Forum for the Economy and Society Conference[5] adopting a system where major corporate sponsors were expected to fund the participation of specific numbers of young women participants can be shown among good practices, and through this sponsorhip system the Conference has significantly improved and diversified youth representation, allowing non-European young women from diverse constituencies and low-income communities to attend.

5 https://www.womens-forum.com/

THOSE WHO HOLD THE FUNDING HOLD THE CONVEYING AND AGENDA-SETTING POWER: FUNDING EVENTS FOR MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

In addition to the emphasis on civil society participation in paragraph 130, which is welcomed, meaningful youth engagement (although not specficially mentioned within the text) is strongly integrated within Our Common Agenda. For meaningful and effective participation and engagement of young, and to push the further step, which is youth co-leaderhsip, the funding methods for youth-led events (not necessarily organized by United Nations entities, but often supported) should change.

The institutions which hold the funding for the organization of youth-focused events hold the power to convey and the power to set the agenda.

The institutions which hold the funding for the organization of youth-focused events hold the power to convey and the power to set the agenda. When providing funding for youth-led events, UN entities should provide bulk funding (or encourage private sector partners to do so) and leave the control for purchasing, individual funding, services, as well as the list of participants to the youth organizations. Accountability can be ensured by strong communication and reporting. However, when funds are provided and a majority of crucial decisions are controlled (agenda, language, list of participants), it is difficult to speak of youth co-leadership, and the events turn out to be youth-focused, not youth-led. The Generation Equality Forum Young Feminist Unconference in 2021 organized by young activists before Generation Equality Paris Forum is a good practice in this aspect, where youth co-leadership was ensured through funding mechansims and Restless Development, as a fiscal sponsor, was able to pay ouy 88% of their grant directly to the young feminist activists leading the conference with less and simpler requirements for paperwork.[6]

6 https://restlessdevelopment.org/generation-equality-forum-young-feminist-unconference/

FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS AND IMPRESSIVE PLEDGES: ACCOUNTABILITY FOR FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

Paragraph 124 of Our Common Agenda is welcomed for its dedication to effective fulfillment of Member States' financial obligations and resolving the financial crisis. A clear vision to improve budget processes, possibly repurposing existing funds and adopting less rigid budgetary procedures, which would be necessary steps to ensure youth-friendly and gender equal funding to reach out to grassroots youth-led feminist organizations. Having said this, Secretary General's invitation to Member States to consider examining the mechanisms for reviewing the budgets and improving how they are formulated and executed should be further expanded to include feminist youth groups. Young people have been actively involved in negotiations with regard to the preparations for the United Nations Youth Office, however, their active, inclusive and meaningful engagement should also be ensured, and their inputs should be integrated through discussions regarding the Youth Office's independent budget; and throughout general budgetary discussions and improvement efforts suggested by the Secretary-General.

Resourcing young feminists is equal parts about providing monetary support and remuneration, and equal parts about skill-building.

Large-scale international gatherings are often closed with impressive, bold financial pledges. In addition to the pledges announced during United Nations Climate Change Conference, Generation Equaliy Forum has been a recent example: at the end of the Generation Equality Paris Forum, a groundbreaking USD 40 billion of financial pledges was announced.[7] While UN Women has followed up with an Accountability Framework and platform, and continues to push commitment makers for regular reporting and implementation, young feminists and civil society has expressed concerns[8] about the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms, as well as transparency with regard to the unanswered questions on how much of the pledged USD 40 billion will directly reach and support the grassroots feminist organizations, youth groups, and underfunded and underrepresented constituencies. Large-scale global events often lack the motivation and momentum in the aftermath period, once pledges are announced. Transparent accountability and follow-up mechanisms, with active engagement of youth (and if these mechanisms exist, their imporvement) as well as coherence and standardization of funding commitments should be prioritized.

7 https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2021/7/press-release-generation-equality-forum-concludes-with-commitments-and-global-acceleration-plan

8 https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/us-40-billion-us-2-billion-unpacking-real-numbers-behind-generation-equality

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

A respectful and contextual approach that allows young people space for autonomous organization and decision-making power on where funds are spent and how is a must. Young people are often disrcarded from budget negotiations and major financial decisions due to lack of experience. However, intergenerational collaboration requires respectful dialogue, equal participation and being mindful of power dynamics. Building sustainable and feminist funding and resourcing mechanism can be done by mutual learning and experience sharing among generations.

Alternatives, such as availability of payment in person, and documentation systems, such as expense vouchers, donation receipts, or individually signed declarations should be available at the in certain local, national and regional events, if not at large-scale global events.

REPORT
FEBRUARY 2023

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION IN GLOBAL DECISION-MAKING

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A GENDER EQUAL MULTILATERAL SYSTEM

Marissa Conway

MESSAGE TO READERS

GWL Voices, a gender and multilateralism advocacy group composed of sixty two global women leaders, presents an unprecedented report on the state of leadership at multilateral institutions. The report shows that by consistently excluding women from top leadership positions, these institutions no longer reflect the societies they serve.

Our advocacy pushes for the integration of women's voices in all spheres of society, particularly in peace and security, global governance, human rights, gender issues, international peace and security, environmental diplomacy, global health, and sustainable development.

Hence, as a collective voice of women's leadership, backed by the support of our partners, this report reflects our stance on an issue whose time is long overdue.

In the wake of unending global challenges, women's representation and participation will result in transformational leadership we all can trust - one the world desperately needs.

We want to thank our partners, GGIN, C4UN, and WEDO, whose foresight and support have enabled us to carry out this critical work.

Here's to elevating our voices for change and inclusion while advancing the issues we care about most.

#GWL VOICES FOR CHANGE & INCLUSION

AUTHOR

Marissa Conway

Diversity in representation and participation is a critical first step to better informed and more nuanced policymaking. It is a catalyst for increasing the range of lived experience that is drawn upon during decisionmaking, which is fundament to a well-oiled democracy. Inviting a multiplicity of people into decisionmaking spaces means the views and needs of people who are impacted by any given policy are more fairly represented. Without women's leadership and participation in multilateral spaces, gender equality is not a possibility.

Multilateral spaces have historically been the realm of men, and the United Nations (UN) is no exception. Though established in 1945, even today we are still seeing significant 'firsts' involving women's representation and participation. Just this year, Ruchira Kamboj became India's first female permanent representative to the UN, and Costa Rica appointed Maritza Chan Valverde as their first female Ambassador of Costa Rica to the UN.

Diversity in representation and participation is a critical first step to better informed and more nuanced policymaking. It is a catalyst for increasing the range of lived experience that is drawn upon during decisionmaking, which is fundament to a well-oiled democracy. Inviting a multiplicity of people into decisionmaking spaces means the views and needs of people who are impacted by any given policy are more fairly represented. Without women's leadership and participation in multilateral spaces, gender equality is not a possibility.

It is important not to assume, however, that women are inherently more peaceful or that women's involvement in policymaking will automatically result in substantive changes for women's and minority rights. Systems of oppression like patriarchy, capitalism, and white supremacy shape societal norms and hierarchies in such a way that often, those in leadership positions must adhere to them in order to be taken seriously as decisionmakers. Increasing women in global decisionmaking, then, is only a first step in ensuring a more equal world. Such an effort requires a simultaneous engagement with systemic and institutional reform if inclusion is to be more than an 'add and stir' scenario.

The UN has historically played a large part in establishing women's representation as a global norm. The Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 created the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which laid out the most comprehensive agenda at the time on gender equality. It was the first global policy framework to include a specific focus on girls' rights; to

reaffirm that women's rights are human rights; and to confirm gender mainstreaming as a key strategy for achieving gender equality. These firsts paved the way for future UN commitments to women's rights and representation. UN Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted in 2000, commits to the meaningful participation of women in peacebuliding efforts, with subsequent and complementary resolutions following. The UN Global Compact was developed in 2000 to encourage businesses worldwide to implement sustainable and socially responsible policies, of which gender equality is a key focus. The Sustainable Development Goals, rolled out in 2015, commit to gender equality as its fifth goal. These are but a few examples of how gender equality is becoming increasingly institutionalised as a priority for the UN.

Promoting a pro-rights agenda at local levels, whether that's within communities, organisations, or governments, is critical to creating international spaces that reflect the same.

The latest iteration of this dedication can be found in the fifth of 12 key commitments as laid out in Our Common Agenda, Secretary-General Guterres's vision for the future of global cooperation. Commitment number five speaks to placing women and girls at the centre, specifically citing a call to repeal gender discriminatory laws; promote gender parity; facilitate women's economic inclusion; include the voices of young women; and eradicate violence against women and girls.

Such commitments are more important than ever. Globally, women's and girl's rights are under threat. Just this year, the United States infamously repealed federal protection for the right to abortion access. Already, a multitude of stories have come out detailing the detrimental impact this policy change has had on reproductive health and wellbeing. This problem is not unique to the United States. Globally, the World Health Organization estimates that between 14,000 and 39,000 maternal deaths are caused because of a lack of access to safe abortion. Those who are historically marginalised, such as people of color, migrants, people with disabilities, and gender-nonconforming people are more acutely impacted by such policy changes.

Utliising an intersectional lens allows for a nuanced recognition that race, sexuality, and class, in addition to gender, influence how any given person interacts with power. When it comes to representation, it means that there is an abundance of lived experience involved in decisionmaking, resulting in more well-informed policies.

Anti-rights states don't only promote their agendas at home but use the UN to advance their aims as well. Some states have attempted to use UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, which have a primary focus on increasing women's representation and leadership in peacebuliding, to remove phrases like "reproductive health" from the agenda. Anti-rights actors specifically target language and policies that challenge traditional patriarchal norms. This means that policies focusing on gender identity, sexual orientation, accountability for gender-based violence, or the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights come under particular attack.

Collaboration with feminist civil society can look like forming civil society advisory groups to allow for accountability. It can look like running consultations to onboard feedback from people with lived experience for any given policy area. It can look like hosting briefings for political leaders with regional expertise.

Mechanisms like Our Common Agenda act as a safeguard against such anti-rights interventions by developing new, UN-led norms on equality, sustainability, and peace. It ensures that the UN presents itself as a space that functions primarily to promote human rights and hold anti-rights actors accountable. The pledge for gender parity under the fifth commitment to centre women and girls is a critical mechanism for unlocking more thorough women's representation and participation in global decisionmaking, both at the UN and at domestic levels. But more is needed to be effective. I propose the following recommendations as a means to both implement and build on Our Common Agenda.

1. Link short term goals with long term goals

Women's representation reflects a shorter term goal focused on inclusion in existing systems. Whilst crucial, such an action tends to be more status quo-friendly and adhere to, rather than challenge, systems of oppression. For this reason, the call for greater women's representation must be embedded within an agenda that engages with the long-term work of reducing sexism, racism, and classism, among other discriminatory hierarchies. Creating a gender equal multilateral system, then, takes women's representation and participation as a first step in the long-term project of institutional reform toward more feminist and rights-based values. Alongside this, examining who is and is not taken seriously as leaders and participants in multilateral spaces sheds light on the way that oppressive norms still have influence. Undergoing such an assessment can identify areas in need of further reform and set out the plan for long-term change.

2. Integrate intersectional perspectives

Agendas in pursuit of gender equality can often slip into speaking about the vague category of 'women and girls' without further distinction. The rights of women and girls, of course, are at the heart of any good gender equality initiative. However, a more nuanced understanding of how social categories influence a person's experience and access to rights is necessary as gender equality means equality for all, regardless of gender; this includes men and gender non-conforming people too.

Utliising an intersectional lens allows for a nuanced recognition that race, sexuality, and class, in addition to gender, influence how any given person interacts with power. When it comes to representation, it means that there is an abundance of lived experience involved in decisionmaking, resulting in more well-informed policies. As a method of analysis, intersectionality calls attention to the often overlooked needs of people facing multiple forms of discrimination. A focus solely on women and girls in policy making spaces doesn't adequately do justice to the experience that a migrant woman of colour might have.

Mechanisms like Our Common Agenda act as a safeguard against such anti-rights interventions by developing new, UN-led norms on equality, sustainability, and peace. It ensures that the UN presents itself as a space that functions primarily to promote human rights and hold anti-rights actors accountable.

3. Follow the lead of feminist civil society

Promoting a pro-rights agenda at local levels, whether that's within communities, organisations, or governments, is critical to creating international spaces that reflect the same. Feminist civil society has long led the grassroots call for integrating local and global action.

Collaboration with feminist civil society can look like forming civil society advisory groups to allow for accountability. It can look like running consultations to onboard feedback from people with lived experience for any given policy area. It can look like hosting briefings for political leaders with regional expertise. Regardless of the mechanism, establishing open and communicative links between institutions and feminist civil society is critical to understanding how gender equality can be achieved.

4. Link the local and the global to ensure policy coherence

Cutting across many of the other recommendations, linking local and global action is key to securing a gender equal multilateral system - and wider society. It almost goes without saying, but achieving gender equality in multilateral spaces is not possible if the people who make up that space aren't all convinced of the need for equality. The dissonance between UN initiatives like Our Common Agenda and anti-gender and anti-rights legislation in some countries is one of the most significant barriers to achieving this.

Even for states that champion human rights and gender equality, policy coherence can often be lacking. International commitments to agendas like Women, Peace and Security, for example, are easy to come by in most countries around the world. However, the commitment to women's inclusion in other aspects of policy building is wanting. Any commitment to gender equality means a commitment to integrating this goal across every team, department, and policy area.

Equality for people regardless of their gender identity isn't a utopia, but something that can be achieved here and now with decisive and bold action.

5. Appropriate funding

Lastly, gender equality iniaitives must be sufficiently resourced in order to be successful. Whether that's funding for feminist civil society action or funding for recruitment campaigns for women in the civil service, each and every commitment must be backed up by adequate finances.

While tremendous gains have been achieved over the past century in the movement for gender equality, there is still a long way to go. The above recommendations can be implemented in multilateral spaces, in domestic policy decisionmaking circles, or in the private sector to strengthen and safeguard gender equality alongside efforts to increase women's representation and participation.

UN initiatives like Our Common Agenda are key to establishing new international rights- and values-based norms. And integrating such norms at every level of society will ensure that our multilateral spaces instinctively reflect these same commitments. Equality for people regardless of their gender identity isn't a utopia, but something that can be achieved here and now with decisive and bold action.

REPORT
FEBRUARY 2023

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY/GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Corey Levine

MESSAGE TO READERS

At GWL Voices, our advocacy pushes for the integration of women's voices and participation in all spheres of society, particularly in peace and security, global governance, human rights, gender issues, international peace and security, environmental diplomacy, global health, and sustainable development.

Hence, as a collective voice of women's leadership, backed by the support of our partners, this report reflects our stance on an issue whose time is long overdue.

In the wake of unending global challenges, the full participation of women and girls in the peace and security agenda will result in transformational leadership we all can trust - one the world desperately needs.

We want to thank our partners, GGIN, C4UN, and WEDO, whose foresight and support have enabled us to carry out this critical work.

Here's to elevating our voices for change and inclusion while advancing the issues we care about most.

#GWL VOICES FOR CHANGE & INCLUSION

AUTHOR

Corey Levine
Human rights and
peace-building policy expert

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps humanity's greatest resource is our own collective capacity, half of which has historically been constrained as a result of gender discrimination. No meaningful social contract is possible without the active and equal participation of women and girls.
Report of the UN Secretary General. Our Common Agenda[1]

Among the many recommendations contained in the UN Secretary General's September 2021 *Our Common Agenda* report, putting 'women and girls at the center of the security agenda' as well as the 'eradication of violence against women and girls' are key components.[2]

While the report addresses several other gender equality issues, including women's economic inclusion, gender-discriminatory laws and gender parity, this C4UN policy brief will focus on violence against women and girls, and women, peace and security (WPS) as part of the New Agenda for Peace. It will first review the context for the development of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, then outline the framework for this "agenda," before looking at the current implementation of WPS and how it relates to *Our Common Agenda*. It will finish with a set of actionable recommendations for governments, civil society and the private sector.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Our Common Agenda was written at an "inflection point in history," as the report itself notes. However, the Women, Peace and Security agenda was born out of a very different 'inflection point in history,' after the end of the Cold War when the multilateral system and its structure and institutions gained ascendency as the competing global superpower hegemony gave way to a new 'international order.'

As the world ushered in the 21st century, there was a renewed optimism about the collective security concept, and in particular, the role of the UN in securing world peace. Much of the

1 Report of the UN Secretary General. Our Common Agenda. Pg. 31
2 Proposed actions under Commitments 3. (*Promote peace and prevent conflicts*) and 5. (*Place women and girls at the centre*) respectively.

thinking animating this new international order was the concept of 'human security,' which meets at the nexus between military, security and development policies prioritizing the security of individuals (not just the security of the state). Human security frameworks encompass such policy issues as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), security sector reform (SSR), the rule of law and international justice, as well as the issue of gender equality and women's human rights.

The failures of the UN missions in Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda in the mid-1990s ushered in the concept of the 'protection of civilians,' (POC), which can be viewed as a pared down, 'actionable' version of the human security framework. The POC mandate is now at the core of all UN peacekeeping missions, 'recognizing the impact civilian casualties has on durable peace, reconciliation and development,'[3] and is linked to other protection agendas, supporting and reinforcing them, including WPS and gender-based violence.[4]

THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY FRAMEWORK

The rise of the human security canon in the post-Cold War era gave women's rights activists around the world the tools with which to push forward the women, peace and security agenda onto the international peace and security landscape. As a result of this worldwide advocacy the legal understanding of gender equality and women's participation and protection in public and private life, has been broadened, particularly with regard to post-conflict and transitional countries.

Our Common Agenda calls for an exploration of 'how to more effectively address violence holistically in all its forms.

There are currently ten UN Security Council resolutions that provide the normative framework for the operationalization of WPS.[5] UNSCR 1325 (2000) set the stage by affirming the importance of the participation of women and the inclusion of gender perspectives in peace negotiations, humanitarian planning, peacekeeping operations, and post-conflict peacebuilding and governance, along four paths - protection, participation, prevention, and relief and recovery. The other nine have contributed to the building of this foundational resolution, and together they 'span a broader range of issues than any other thematic area on the Security Council agenda.'[6]

3 UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1265 (1999). Para. 4.

4 Handbook on the Protection of Civilians in UN Peacekeeping Operations. UN Department of Peace Operations, 2020. Pg. 13.

5 The WPS UN Security Council Resolutions are: 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), 2493 (2019). Resolution 2538 (2020) covers all aspects of women in peacekeeping.

6 *Mapping Women, Peace and Security in the UN Security Council.* (2020) NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security: 2019.

"PUTTING WOMEN AND GIRLS AT THE CENTRE OF SECURITY POLICY": THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WPS IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR COMMON AGENDA

As OCA makes clear, gender equality is central to the new agenda for peace, placing women and girls 'at the heart of peace and security.' The report builds on the existing women, peace and security agenda and its principles of prevention, demilitarization and equality, linking interpersonal violence and insecurity, women's equal participation in peacemaking and in all security decision-making, as key components of 'how peace and security are defined, negotiated and sustained.'[7] Progress has been uneven to date. Below are some examples of the various ways that the Women, Peace and Security agenda has moved forward.

Drivers of Progress

All UN peacekeeping and political missions now have Gender Advisor and/or Gender Officer posts. They help ensure that WPS issues are mainstreamed and integrated within mission planning and project delivery. Overall, Mission gender advisors are responsible for supporting the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security. This can encompass developing strategies and programs to address women's political participation, gender justice, women's economic empowerment, and gender-based violence amongst other issues.

Most UN Agencies operating in the field also have gender advisors or focal points as well. Within the Global Cluster System, the Gender-based Violence sub-cluster, led by UNFPA, provides a multi-sectoral coordination and response mechanism with which to address issues with regard to violence against women and girls on the ground.

There are also Women Protection Advisors, WPAs, deployed to the field that focus on conflict-related sexual violence, (CRSV). WPAs engage with the parties to conflict to obtain commitments on addressing CRSV and implementing them, feed into DDR and SSR processes, as well as respond to individual cases of CRSV.

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7 https://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/resource/mapping-women-peace-and-security-in-the-un-security-council-2019/

The Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security, which is an official Security Council working Group, was established in 2016. It focuses on strengthening the oversight and coordination of the implementation of WPS mechanisms and activities, inputting into Security Council debates and resolutions, and advocates for women's participation and leadership within the UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding infrastructure and pushes for robust WPS mandates from the Security Council. It is a key forum in which the leadership of peace operations can push for women's enhanced engagement in their respective contexts. The contribution to women, peace and security by the IEG can be seen in the significant jump in Security Council resolutions that included explicit references to WPS after the IEG was formed.

The Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations launched by Canada in 2017 is seen as a concrete way to achieve better gender parity and representation in UN peacekeeping missions by providing financial and technical support to troop- and police-contributing countries in order to enhance the meaningful participation of uniformed women. The Initiative also develops projects designed to incentivize the deployment of women military and police in peace operations as well as to promote gender equality in the security sector.

The rise of the human security canon in the post-Cold War era gave women's rights activists around the world the tools with which to push forward the women, peace and security agenda onto the international peace and security landscape. As a result of this worldwide advocacy the legal understanding of gender equality and women's participation and protection in public and private life, has been broadened, particularly with regard to post-conflict and transitional countries.

Under the Initiative, A "*Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations*" (MOWIP) barrier assessment methodology was developed to better understand the challenges facing women deploying to UN peace operations, and how countries can increase opportunities for women in deployments. Thus far, Canada, Germany, Ghana, Senegal, Uruguay, and Zambia have all undertaken the MOWIP assessment.[8]

8 Canadian Department of National Defence News Release. Aug. 31, 2022: https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2022/08/department-of-national-defence-and-canadian-armed-forces-release-elsie-initiative-barrier-assessment-identifying-barriers-for-women-in-un-peace-ope.html

One of the most important contributions to the operationalization of the WPS agenda are domestic National Action Plans (NAPs) on Women, Peace and Security. As a follow up to the commitments made in UNSCR 1325, the Security Council in 2005 called on member states to develop domestic Action Plans. NAPs are country-level strategies that lay out the commitments of an individual state to implement the four pillars of UNSCR 1325, charting the course of action for localizing action on the Women, Peace and Security agenda. This includes outlining the objectives and activities that countries will take, both on a domestic and international level, in order to secure the rights of women and girls in conflict settings; prevent armed conflict and violence, including against women and girls; and ensure the meaningful participation of women in peace and security.

Currently 103 countries have NAPs, representing 53 percent of UN members states. There are also 11 Regional Action Plans (RAP) in place, including the League of Arab States and the European Union, as well as multilateral organizations such as NATO.[9] In some countries, the development of NAPs has been undertaken in parallel with Local Action Plans in particular cities or regions of a country, such as Ukraine. Many National Action Plans also provide directives for government agencies and bodies to develop their own plans for mainstreaming WPS across their work.

One of the most important contributions to the operationalization of the WPS agenda are domestic National Action Plans (NAPs) on Women, Peace and Security.

While 1325 National Action Plans are becoming commonplace tools for mainstreaming women, peace and security, the advent of national feminist foreign policies are much newer developments. Sweden was the first country to apply a feminist lens to their international affairs and assistance policies, beginning in 2014. Since then Canada, Mexico, France, Luxembourg and Germany have either developed comprehensive feminist foreign policies or incorporated feminist policies into their international assistance.[10]

A feminist foreign policy 'means applying a systematic gender equality perspective throughout the whole foreign policy agenda.'[11] It demands that governments re-think the meaning of security and 'the role countries can play in building a safer, healthier, and more peaceful world.' Central to the concept of feminist foreign policy is the design of policies that promote gender equality, ensuring that women in multilateral decision-making spaces, the de-escalation of conflict, and focusing on disarmament, demilitarisation, and peacebuilding efforts that centre the experiences of women.

9 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF): https://1325naps.peacewomen.org

10 Ibid: https://1325naps.peacewomen.org

11 Ibid.

Both NAPs and Feminist Foreign Policies represent a significant leap forward on the domestic front in ensuring that women and girls are an integral part of the social contract postulated by *Our Common Agenda*.

Obstacles of Progress

Despite the 'robust normative framework of the WPS agenda', there continues to be many impediments to its full implementation. As the UN Secretary General notes in his 2021 annual report on Women, Peace and Security[12]:

- Women represent only 23 percent of delegates in peace processes involving the UN;
- Currently, less than 30 percent of peace agreements have gender provisions in them;
- By the end of 2020, only 5.2 percent of military troops in peace operations were women, which is below the 6.5 per cent target set by the UN for that year;
- Within the humanitarian sphere, sectors that address gender-based violence received only 33 percent of requested funding, compared with the average funding of 61 percent for UN appeals overall;
- Aid to local women's rights organizations in conflict-affected countries is below one percent of total bilateral assistance;
- In recent resolutions renewing peacekeeping mandates, the Security Council added gender considerations to the reform of security and defence forces in only 4 out of 11 country-specific situations.[13]

The reasons for the lack of progress include the following:

Various analyses of UN peacekeeping missions have shown that gender is not systematically integrated across peace operations, and that the specific experiences, rights, and needs of women and girls in conflict situations are neither included in analysis and assessments, nor inform strategies for the design of missions or program development, which in turn leads to a lack of resources for WPS initiatives.[14] The lack of a gender perspective has set up a competing dynamic between expectations laid out in security council resolutions and mission mandates and the capacities of the missions.

12 The 2022 report will be released in October.

13 Women, Peace and Security. Report of the UN Secretary-General. *UN Security Council*. S/2021/827 Sept. 27, 2021. Para 5.

14 The 2015 Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) is the most prominent one to highlight this issue.

Specialized posts such as gender advisors and women's protection advisors are often the last to be filled, in part because of the specific skills needed to carry out the duties, and the first to be dropped when there are budget cuts. Some Gender Advisors have direct access to the SRSG and thus are able to provide direct strategic advice to senior leadership; others report much further down the chain. As well, within the military and police components of the mission, gender advisors or focal points are not always full-time staffed positions and those holding these posts do not necessarily have the expertise in gender, but simply have it tacked on to their other duties.

As peacekeepers become more targeted, more emphasis and expense has been given over to their protection. This 'bunkerization' mentality has led to reduced interaction with the local population, making it even more challenging to effectively implement WPS strategies.

While early advocates framed WPS as an anti-militarization agenda, one that focused on 'women and peace', there has been a shift towards 'women and security,' with a focus on making wars safer for women rather than challenging the security paradigm that emphasizes state security and counter-terrorism. As such, women's participation in national militaries and multilateral peacekeeping missions has now moved to the foreground as a WPS priority.

The lack of a gender perspective has set up a competing dynamic between expectations laid out in security council resolutions and mission mandates and the capacities of the missions.

In addition, stringent counter-terrorism laws and regulations that are in place to prevent money from being channelled to terrorist groups have impacted the ability of local women's groups to access aid and development assistance.

While the focus on sexual violence in conflict that has emerged over the last few years is a very welcome development, conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) has, to a certain extent, surpassed other women's protection issues to become a primary focus. This means that other forms of gender-based violence, including early and forced marriage, 'honor' killings, and sex trafficking, as well as attacks on women in public life, lack of access to health services and education do not receive as much attention.

While National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security can be effective tools for governments, many NAPs are aspirational rather than actionable. For example, only 31 NAPs include a budget for implementation. The lack of a uniform framework for the NAP, with each country determining their own indicators and areas of focus, as well as a lack of budget allocation, makes it hard to determine whether national governments are following through on their WPS commitments.

ACTIONS FOR MOVING THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA FORWARD WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF OUR COMMON AGENDA

Despite these challenges, Our Common Agenda offers an opportunity to 'turbocharge' not only the 2030 Agenda but the way in which Women, Peace and Security issues are considered and incorporated in the international arena in the 21st century.

Below are a set of concrete actions for governments, civil society and the private sector to consider in the development and implementation of policies and initiatives that enhance the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. They are designed to form an integral part of the proposed new Agenda for Peace as recommended in *Our Common Agenda*.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

As already noted, Our Common Agenda builds on the existing women, peace and security agenda by placing 'women and girls at the centre of the security agenda.'[15] The normative framework for this are the ten UN Security Council WPS resolutions.[16] The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, (1995), stemming from the Fourth World Conference on Women set the stage for WPS resolutions a few years earlier with its 'Strategic Objective and Action E,' which addresses the impact of women and armed conflict.[17]

15 Commitment 5. Report of the UN Secretary General. *Our Common Agenda.*

16 The WPS UN Security Council Resolutions are: 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), 2493 (2019). Collectively, they affirm the importance of the participation of women and the inclusion of gender perspectives in peace negotiations, humanitarian planning, peacekeeping operations, and post-conflict peacebuilding and governance, along four paths - protection, participation, prevention, and relief and recovery. several focus specifically on conflict related sexual violence. Although Resolution 2538 (2020) is not considered one of the ten WPS resolutions, it covers all aspects of women in peacekeeping.

17 *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.* United Nations. Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women. Action E states that the attainment of 'local, national, regional and global peace is inextricably linked with the advancement of women.' Para 18. Pg. 3. A/CONF.177/20/Rev.1.

Our Common Agenda also calls for the 'eradication of violence against women and girls,' making the link between 'interpersonal violence and security,' as well as highlighting new forms of violence against women and girls. the and the **Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence**.[18]

Since 1979, UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, (CEDAW), has been the legal basis for the advancement of the rights of women and girls.[19] But it is the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* that is still considered the most comprehensive global policy framework and blueprint for action on gender equality. Many of the recommendations contained in this brief, which are based on recommendations made by current initiatives, stem from this seminal document.

STRENGTHENING THE RESPONSIVENESS TO WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY, AND TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN OUR COMMON AGENDA

The challenges of gender mainstreaming within the humanitarian-development continuum

Our Common Agenda positions gender equality as a cross-cutting issue.[20] However, as pointed out in a recent position paper on OCA by several high level UN appointees, "the undefined structure, policy, and responsibilities of the UN system on gender, including the humanitarian coordination system, poses a challenge when implementing a gender mainstreaming strategy."[21]

18 Known as the Istanbul Convention, (1993), there are 37 signatory countries.

19 The *Vienna Declaration and Programme for Action* stemming from the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, pushed this further with its declaration that "the human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights." *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*.. Art. 18. Pg. 4. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/vienna.pdf

20 The other cross-cutting issues identified in *Our Common Agenda* are: security, climate change, health, development and human rights. Pg. 31.

21 Position of the UN special rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, and the Working Group on the discrimination against women and girls on the UN Secretary-General's Report, Our Common Agenda. (*Position Paper*). Pg. 3.

This in turn has led to a patchwork and piecemeal application of gender issues in conflict and post-conflict settings. Problems include both overlapping and competing agendas and personnel, as well as significant gaps in terms of roles and responsibilities with regard to a gender mandate. As the *Position Paper* notes: "Efforts to improve gender mainstreaming in interventions that lie along the humanitarian-development continuum are challenged by structural limitations of the compositions of the UN Country Teams and the Humanitarian Country Teams."[22]

Part of this institutional 'fuzziness' can be attributed to a lack of 'clear and achievable mandates.' Mandates can be made 'deliberately vague' as a result of the 'political compromise' that is needed in order to secure Security Council agreement for a mission.[23] Doctrinal differences between the military, police and civilian components of the UN system as well as the different goals and interests between the UN Secretariat, troop-contributing countries, host states, relief organizations can murky the waters further with regard to how gender may be mainstreamed in humanitarian and development settings.

Key Actions for Implementation:

- Centre women in the design and execution of humanitarian aid, recovery, peacebuilding and development efforts by: developing standardized trainings and resources for gender-responsive humanitarian action; prioritizing gender-sensitive budgets, including gender analysis in all humanitarian appeals, and significantly increasing funding to local women's rights and women-led organizations.[24]

- Institutionalize the participation of civil society and the private sector all humanitarian aid, recovery and peacebuilding and development efforts by providing opportunities for official representation in relevant national and international platforms.[25]

- Develop databases to collect sex-disaggregated data which would help provide concrete evidence of the impacts of humanitarian emergencies on conflict-affected women and on peace and security.[26]

22 *Position Paper.* Pg. 2.

23 Adamczyk, S. (2019). *Twenty Years of Protection of Civilians at the UN Security Council.* Humanitarian Policy Group Policy Brief No. 74, pp. 1–13. Overseas Development Institute. Pg. 5

24 WPS-HA Framework. Pp. 4-7.

25 *Global Leaders Call for Urgent Action on Gender Equality.* 2022 Global Women Leaders Summit. (GWL 2022 Statement). #Overdue4equity, The Rockefeller Foundation, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Global-Women-Leaders-Statement-and-Call-for-Gender-Equity-Reforms-combined.pdf. Pg. 5.

26 *"Equality for Women. Peace for All."* Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022. Global Network of Women Peacebuilders. (GNWP Strategic Plan). Pg. 19. https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020-GNWP-StratPlan_9june_main.pdf

Fragmentation of the WPS agenda

UN studies have shown that gender is not being systematically integrated across peace operations, and that the specific experiences, rights, and needs of women and girls in conflict situations are neither included in analysis and assessments, nor inform concrete strategies for the design of missions.[27] In addition, the challenges of gender mainstreaming often means there is 'limited coordination and information-sharing' between the various issues that compose international interventions.

Part of the issue is that with the growth of specialized positions, including both gender and women's protection advisors and officers within the humanitarian coordination system, this has had the adverse effect of encouraging the sidelining of these issues in missions rather than their integration. Having specialized expertise on hand allows for other mission staff to assume that the gender advisor or women's protection officer will take care of 'women's issues,' leading to even more pronounced silos.[28]

Central to the concept of feminist foreign policy is the design of policies that promote gender equality, ensuring that women in multilateral decision-making spaces, the de-escalation of conflict, and focusing on disarmament, demilitarisation, and peacebuilding efforts that centre the experiences of women.

As the 2022 Statement from the Global Women's Leaders Summit points out: "gender mainstreaming efforts, while important, are limited by insufficient knowledge across staff and lack of training, and responsibilities are too often relegated to a siloed gender focal point instead of organizational leadership."[29] The statement goes on to note that, "discussions on peacebuilding and humanitarian action often do not reflect the perspectives of local women and civil society, and realities on the ground."[30] This is made more challenging due to the fact that funding often fails to reach women-led organizations, particularly at the grassroots level due in part to 'complicated grant applications or onerous reporting requirements.'[31]

27 The most prominent of these is the 2015 *Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on Uniting Our Strengths for Peace: Politics, Partnership and People.* (HIPPO). A/70/95 – S/2015/446.

28 Mader, K. (2020). *Mapping Women, Peace and Security in the UN Security Council.* NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. Pg. 6

29 *GWL 2022 Statement.* Pg. 5.

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid.*

Key Actions for Implementation:

- Prioritize the development UNSCR 1325 National Action Plans by: a) designing programs in collaboration with women and women's organizations that reflect current conflict dynamics and address changing realities on the ground; b) providing concrete plans, policies, and targets to increase the number of women in leadership roles, particularly in the security sector, as well as in peacekeeping operations, and peacebuilding and humanitarian organizations; c) allocating sufficient funding and other resources for the implementation of the NAP;[32] d) promoting the localization of UNSCR 1325.[33]

- Adopt specific commitments and targets to advance inclusion and leadership of women, local women's organizations and networks at country level humanitarian decision-making processes, and at the global level across field missions, UN Country Teams and Humanitarian Country Teams.[34]

- Provide direct assistance to local women's organizations, including through UN-led peacebuilding mechanisms such as the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, UN Women Global Facility, as well as through pledging conferences in order to mobilize resources, and standardize protocols to address the barriers for women's, including at the local level, to successfully apply for, and utilize funds,[35] participate in global policy convenings, build networks and share expertise.[36]

Emphasis on Security rather than Peace

While Our Common Agenda acknowledges the need to have a "better understanding of the underlying drivers and systems of influence that are sustaining conflict," and stresses the importance of "investing in prevention and peacebuilding," there remains an emphasis on 'reducing strategic risks' related to disarmament and non-proliferation of both conventional and nuclear weapons, as well as addressing and adapting to new security risks, including terrorism and cyberattacks, particularly on civilian infrastructure.[37]

These issues, while necessary for global survival, do not examine the underlying assumptions

32 *GWL 2022 Statement.* Pg. 5.

33 The Global Network of Women Peacebuilders has set as a target, "to make the localization of UNSCR 1325 standard practice in 10 additional countries," noting that localization "has been cited by the UN Secretary-General as a key implementation strategy on WPS in his reports to the Security Council." *GNWP Strategic Plan*. Pg. 13.

34 Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action Compact Framework. (*WPS-HA Framework*). Pg. 14. https://wpshacompact.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/WPS-HA-Compact_Framework-EN-Web.pdf

35 This is the first Action under "Financing the WPS Agenda and Gender Equality in Humanitarian Programming" in the *WPS-HA Framework*. As the Framework points out: "In 2019, women's organizations and institutions in fragile contexts received USD 190 million, which represents only close to 1% of gender equality-focused aid to fragile contexts." Pp. 6-7.

36 *GWL 2022 Statement.* Pg. 5.

37 *Our Common Agenda.* Pg. 60

of this security paradigm and the impact that this has on humanity's ability to develop and thrive in peace and prosperity with more and more state resources consumed by the need to provide 'security.'

Although OCA does point to the need to "reduce excessive military budgets, ensure adequate social spending, tailor development assistance to address root causes of conflict, link disarmament to development opportunities,"[38] a clear roadmap to achieving this needs to be established. Early advocates framed WPS as an anti-militarization agenda, one that focused on 'women and peace.' However, since 9/11 there has been a shift towards 'women and security,' with a focus on making wars safer for women rather than challenging the new security paradigm that emphasizes state security and counter-terrorism. As such, women's participation in national militaries and multilateral peacekeeping missions has now moved to the foreground as a WPS priority.[39]

Key Actions for Implementation:

- Allocate at least 15 percent of peacebuilding funds to programs that advance gender equality as a principal objective and ensure that gender is mainstreamed across all programming and policy platforms as well and increase investment in pooled funding mechanisms to support national action plans;[40]
- Establish a fund to ensure that civil society, particularly women's organizations, have access to resources to participate in global policy convenings, build networks and share expertise, as well as create and coordinate tracking mechanisms for gender-focused funding;[41]
- Ensure that gender equity is integrated into foreign policy, development and security assistance, backed by adequate resources.[42]

Linking gender-based violence and the WPS agenda

Our Common Agenda calls for an exploration of 'how to more effectively address violence holistically in all its forms.' The report also recognizes that health needs to be addressed as a public good. These contexts are necessary for eradicating violence against women and girls as called for by OCA. However, it is also critical to understand the integral link between gender-based violence and conflict: the violence against women and girls that takes place

38 *Our Common Agenda.* Pg. 60.

39 Levine, C. & Kouvo, S. (2020). *Gender, human rights and security*. in The Gender and Security Agenda. De Jonge Ouderaat, C.; Brown, M.E. Routledge Studies in Gender and Security. Pg. 203

40 *WPS-HA Framework.* Pg. 6.

41 *Ibid.*

42 *GWL 2022 Statement.* Pg. 5. At least six countries have either developed comprehensive feminist foreign policies or incorporated feminist policies into their international development work: Sweden, Canada, Mexico, France, Luxembourg and Germany.

during times of conflict is 'connected to and derives from the same causes as violence that takes place in times of peace.'[43] This is key to ensuring that the issue of violence against girls and women is not siloed as a 'women's matter', but rather regarded as a public health issue fundamentally linked to the 'prosperity and development' of the state.[44]

As the report itself points out, "increases in some forms of violence, particularly against women and girls tend to be an early warning sign of diminishing law and order and rising insecurity that may catalyse into broader conflict."[45] However, this has not yet translated into action. For example, according to the latest Secretary-General's annual report on Women, Peace and Security, initiatives to address GBV only received 33 percent of requested humanitarian funding as "compared with average funding of 61 percent for UN appeals funding."[46]

Over the past few decades, there has been an increasing recognition that the most durable solutions to prevent and resolve conflict and to build sustainable peace are those that are gender-responsive.

Key Actions for Implementation:

- Develop legislation that expands the definition of gender-based violence as well as speaks to the linkages between the roots causes of violence against women and girls that occurs in times of peace and that occurs during conflict; [47]
- Make available adequate resources to ensure that the issue of violence against women and girls is addressed in a holistic manner that address the underlying causes of gender-based violence and provide more long-term interventions, ensuring that survivors have access to the full range of gender-responsive and survivor-centered services and care;[48]
- Ensure that women and girls are at the center of the design, implementation and evaluation of gender-based violence prevention and response efforts.[49]

43 *Our Common Agenda.* Pg. 27.
44 *Position Paper.* Pp. 1-2
45 *Our Common Agenda.* Pp. 27 & 60
46 UN Secretary-General Report. *Women, Peace and Security.* (2021). Pg. 2.
47 *Position Paper.* Pg. 2 & *WPS-HA Framework.* Pg.4.
48 *Ibid.*
49 *WPS-HA Framework.* Pg. 5.

Gender-based Online Harassment and Bullying

Our Common Agenda speaks to the need to include women and girls in addressing online harassment, recognizing that much of the hate speech and bullying taking place online is gender-based. Gender stereotyping, discrimination and violence have become the norm with social media. As the Position Paper, notes, 'disinformation is being used as a deliberate strategy by those pushing back against attempts to bring in stronger measures of gender equality. A combination of tactics is being employed that involves disinformation and harmful stereotypes in order to keep women and girls in a state of oppression.'[50] This 'infodemic' is even more endemic in conflict-affected states, where a lack of access to information that provides countering viewpoints to the disinformation.

Women's participation in national militaries and multilateral peacekeeping missions has now moved to the foreground as a WPS priority.

Not only does this online gender divide exacerbate "gender bias and male default thinking, it has pushed many women out of the public conversation."[51] In conflict-affected and authoritarian states especially, this technology, along with digital surveillance, have helped governments control populations and influence behaviour, often to the detriment of women and girls.[52]

While OCA calls for the protection of online space and the strengthening of its governance through a multi-stakeholder approach, (UN, national governments, private sector and civil society), in terms of a 'Global Digital Compact,' "there is a need to expand the description of the problems and violations that women encounter online, naming them gender-based violence, which includes but is not limited to harassment."[53]

Key Actions for Implementation:

- Develop legislation to include new forms of gender-based violence with regard to online harassment, misinformation, and harmful stereotyping, as well as the recognition of other forms of gender-based violence including psychological forms of violence. [54]
- The Global Digital Compact "should prioritize commitments that establish new internet and social media standards with women leaders, activists, and private sector actors."[55]

50 *Position Paper.* Pg. 6.
51 *Our Common Agenda.* Pg. 63.
52 *WPS-HA Framework.* Pg. 9.
53 *Position Paper.* Pg. 4.
54 *Ibid.*
55 *GWL 2022 Statement.* Pg. 5.

CONCLUSION

Over the past few decades, there has been an increasing recognition that the most durable solutions to prevent and resolve conflict and to build sustainable peace are those that are gender-responsive. Yet, despite the need for gender analyses to effectively address the root causes of conflict, as well as the need to ensure that women's voices are fully integrated in peace efforts and humanitarian action, women's considerations remain overwhelmingly excluded from these efforts.[56]

It will need significant political will as well as substantial resources in order to bring a 'gendered approach to funding, policy and programming decisions' in the implementation of OCA commitments. Shifting the global status-quo with regard to women, peace and security, and gender-based violence will require buy-in and commitment from across every sector. [57]

RESOURCES

- Global Acceleration Plan. Generation Equality Forum. https://forum.generationequality.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/UNW%20-%20GAP%20Report%20-%20EN.pdf
- Global Leaders Call for Urgent Action on Gender Equity. #Overdue4Equity, The Rockefeller Foundation, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. Sept. 2022: https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/report/global-women-leaders-call-for-urgent-action-on-gender-equity/
- Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) Strategic Plan 2018 2022: https://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/member-resource/gnwp-strategic-plan-2018-2022/
- Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action Compact Framework: https://wpshacompact.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/WPS-HA-Compact_Framework-EN-Web.pdf

56 *WPS-HA Framework.* Pp. 2/3.

57 *GWL 2022 Statement. i.*

REPORT
FEBRUARY 2023

CLIMATE JUSTICE

A FEMINIST FRAMEWORK FOR THE OUR COMMON AGENDA REPORT

Fatema Khafagy | Soon-Young Yoon

MESSAGE TO READERS

Rural women are responsible for 43 percent of agricultural work in developing countries, and in some of Asia and Africa, they reach up to 60 percent, according to FAO.

Food security, family income, knowledge development, strengthening associative production systems, and family and social cohesion largely depend on rural women. Yet, despite their contributions and their central role in eradicating poverty, rural women have less access than men to land, to credit, to the means of production, such as water, to markets, to education, and to decision-making spaces.

One of the most vulnerable groups to the effects of the climate crisis are women, and among them, those who live in rural areas.

The common elements that mark the life of rural women in the world are the overload of work due to the gender division of labor; lack of social and economic recognition of their work, and, as mentioned, economic insecurity; and low access to social protection systems.

Agriculture is the productive sector where these gender inequalities are most visible and exacerbated by climate change's effects. With approximately two-thirds of the female labor force in developing countries engaged in agricultural work but owning less than 10 percent of the land, their income and food security have become increasingly unpredictable where climate change is concerned.

This situation forces women to work harder to support the household and walk even longer distances to collect water and firewood, increasing their risk of violence or injury and leaving them less time to access training and education, develop skills, earn an income, and be financially independent.

Despite their increased vulnerability to the effects of climate change, women are responding to climate change in innovative ways, using their creativity, traditional knowledge, and forms of collective organization to address the climate crisis.

At GWL Voices, our advocacy pushes for the integration of women's voices in all spheres of society, particularly in peace and security, global governance, human rights, gender issues, international peace and security, environmental diplomacy, global health, and sustainable development.

Hence, as a collective voice of women's leadership, backed by the support of our partners, this report reflects our stance on an issue whose time is long overdue.

The report provides an opportunity for reflection. It serves as a call to action and a timely reminder to shift from practices that hinder women's advancement in the agricultural sector.

We want to thank our partners, GGIN, C4UN, and WEDO, whose foresight and support have enabled us to carry out this critical work.

Here's to elevating our voices for change and inclusion while advancing the issues we care about most.

#GWL VOICES
FOR CHANGE & INCLUSION

AUTHORS

Fatema Khafagy

Founder of the Alliance for Arab Women, and Soon-Young Yoon,
UN representative International Alliance of Women

Soon-Young Yoon

UN representative International Alliance of Women

Soon-Young Yoon is Chair of the Board at the Women's Environment and Development Organization and author of "Citizen of the World: Soon-Young and the UN". In 2021, she was appointed to the Council on Gender Equality convened by H. E. Ambassador, Abdhulla Shahid, the President of the 76th UN General Assembly. During her past tenure as chair of the NGO CSW/NY, the committee launched the Cities for CEDAW campaign in the US. She was a Social Development officer for UNICEF in the Southeast Asia office as well as the Social Scientist at WHO/SEARO in New Delhi. She serves as a board member of the International Foundation for Ewha Womans University and on the Global Advisory Board of the Harvard AIDS Initiative. She is also a founding member of the Women Mayor's Network in association with the National Democratic Institute.

A former columnist for the EarthTimes newspaper, she is co-editor with Dr Jonathan Samet of the WHO monograph, "Gender, Women, and the Tobacco Epidemic." Yoon received her A.B. in French literature with honors, a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Michigan and has a certificate in computer graphics from the Pratt Institute of the Arts. She is married to Richard M. Smith, former Editor-in-Chief and President of Newsweek and current President of the Pinkerton Foundation.

(We commit to) Action by the General Assembly on territorial threats of climate change and to prevent, protect and resolve situations of environmental displacement
(Our Common Agenda, p6. UN 2021)

INTRODUCTION

We are all part of an interconnected global ecological system. Keeping the earth's temperature below the critical threshold of 1.5 degrees C is not possible without women's leadership on a global scale.[1] Fortunately, women and girls are stepping up to the challenge. Indigenous women in Latin America are leading the way to protect biodiversity and defend rain forests. In Europe, feminists are protesting to ensure healthier, greener cities for all. Young women and girls in Asian cities are marching in the streets for climate justice. And Arab women spoke up loud and clear at the climate summit held in Egypt. Even with these upward trends, much more must be done to ensure women's decision-making power in climate negotiations. For example, less than 38 percent of delegations at recent COPS were women.[2]

Why are feminists demanding a voice in the future of our planet? UN reports show that during natural disasters in developing countries, more women are dying than men.[3] Violence against women and sex trafficking increases after floods, wildfires and droughts.[4] Women produce up to 80 percent of the food in Africa but own less than 10 percent of the land, making it difficult for them to help adapt to droughts.[5] And household air pollution due to solid fuels and polluting cooking stoves, is one of the top causes of female deaths from non-communicable diseases.[6]

In many industrialized countries, racially marginalized women and girls often have less access to social services, health services and live in sub-standard housing. As a result, they are less resilient during and after extreme weather events like floods. Migrants and refugees who flee their climate-affected countries will face challenges as they are the first to lose their jobs during financial downturns.

Furthermore, climate-related emergencies are adding to the burden of women in the care economy. For example, women make up more than 70% of all health service providers.[7] Underpaid, and often overworked, this vital work force is being put under extraordinary stress during climate-related emergencies. The impact goes far beyond these women; it threatens the viability of entire health systems.

1 This text draws from a published article by Soon-Young Yoon entitled "Gender Equality, Health and Climate Change" in Health is a Political Choice, WHO, October 2022.

2 https://wedo.org/womens-participation-in-the-unfccc-2022-report/

3 "Gender, Climate Change and Health", WHO, Geneva 2014

4 This is true, especially when associated with food insecurity and absence of social protection. See "End the disconnect, Sima Bahous, in "G7 performance on climate change", https://www.globalgovernanceproject.org/end-the-disconnect/sima-sami-bahous/ and "Gender, Displacement and Climate Change" UNHCR, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, July 2020.

5 IFAD https://reliefweb.int/report/world/africa-women-are-behind-80-percent-continents-food-production

6 "Gender inequality and restrictive gender norms: framing the challenges to health" L. Heise and others in The Lancet, June, 2019; 15.

7 "10 key issues in ensuring gender equity in the global health workforce" WHO, https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/10-key-issues-in-ensuring-gender-equity-in-the-global-health-workforce

GENDER, CLIMATE AND OUR COMMON AGENDA

The Secretary-General's Our Common Agenda Report acknowledges that gender equality and women's leadership are central to the solutions to combat climate change. However, it fails to provide a feminist framework to guide implementation—the all-important "how" policies can make a difference to environmental governance. Neither does it put gender equality and human rights at the center of its recommendations such as holding the private sector accountable for climate injustice. As the statement by the women's major group expressed:

> The WMG recommends further expanding the concept of a renewed social contract to include principles of ecological and environmental justice. The UN and governments would benefit from a deepening into the notion of an eco-social contract, which combines the rights of people within planetary boundaries, with special emphasis on human rights and gender justice.[8]

The purpose of this paper is to suggest a feminist framework that is needed to boost the climate governance architecture as part of a renewed effort for better environmental governance. This analysis is also essential to reframe the elements needed in the Pact for the Future.[9] Elements should: a) be grounded in regional realities as a starting point for climate justice, b) ensure an intersectional analysis, recognizing multiple layers of gender-based discrimination such as by race, age, disability, ethnicity, religious, socio-economic, and migrant status, c) use women's human rights mandates such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW) to ensure an inclusive, action-oriented climate governance architecture, and d) promote holistic solutions across the pillars of peace, equality/human rights, and sustainable development. Concerning that last point, women have called for a feminist standard to measure the success of all environment and economic policies. For example, among the demands made by African feminists at COP27, was that "countries commit to immediately halt all new investments in fossil fuels and nuclear energy, with a clear and urgent shift from a fossil fuel-based economy to a sustainable, just and feminist economy centering gender-responsive use of renewable energies."[10]

8 See https://womensmajorgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/WMG-Analysis-on-_Our-Common-Agenda_.pdf

9 The Summit of the Future to be held at the UN in 2024 will result in a Pact for the Future, envisioning a renewed multilateralism and the UN for future generations.

10 Standing in our Power, African Women and Girls Demands for COP27, African feminist taskforce, Women and Gender constituency, 2022. https://womengenderclimate.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/WGC_COP27-African-Feminists-Demands_EN_final.pdf

THE CASE EXAMPLE OF THE ARAB REGION[11]

The Arab region is experiencing the effects of climate change, including the rise in temperatures which is threatening life on earth through the increase of climate-induced crises, the scarcity of water resources, sea-level rise, river pollution, and other factors that affect societies at large, and women more specifically. Women suffer the risks and consequences of climate change, amidst already ongoing armed conflict and wars in the Arab region, and the continuation of the Israeli military occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Arab governments were delayed in addressing climate change issues and their impact on marginalized and impoverished communities in the region.

Women suffer the risks and consequences of climate change, amidst already ongoing armed conflict and wars in the Arab region, and the continuation of the Israeli military occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

MORE DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAR ZONES AND CROSS-BORDER REGIONS

In the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), Israel controls 80 percent of the water from the West Bank's aquifers. In Gaza, people are denied access to 20 percent of the arable agricultural land which is in the border "buffer zone" delineated by Israel. In the West Bank and East Jerusalem, 25 poorly regulated air, soil, and water caused by Israeli settlements pose more environmental threats. One hundred and eighteen (118) water and sanitation facilities were destroyed in Palestine over the period 2012-2013. Food insecurity currently affects one-third of Palestinians. It is expected to rise as 85 percent of agriculture in Palestine is rain-fed and rainfall is expected to decline by 30 percent in the Eastern Mediterranean.

11 This section draws from an article "Climate Justice from the Feminist Perspective," Transform! Europe online publication 10 November 2022, https://www.transform-network.net/en/blog/article/climate-justice-in-the-arab-region-from-the-feminist-perspective/

Cross-border dependencies between countries in the region complicate responses to the climate crisis. Iraq's dependence on Turkey and Iran for its steady water supply increases its vulnerability. Syria relies also on water from the Euphrates and Turkey. When Turkey built dams and restricted the flow of water to Syria during the war, the country experienced major shortages. Palestinians' dependence on water purchased from the occupying power places them in vulnerable situations. In addition, the Levant, the Maghreb, and the Gulf states need to maintain stable political relations to protect potential shared transborder electricity grids.

FEMINISATION OF THE AGRICULTURE LABOUR

In the Arab region, most of the female workforce is in agriculture. In these countries, millions of females work on agricultural land that is not their own. This is true even though women who work in the agricultural sector are the most qualified to conserve land and water resources, as well as the environment at large.

In many industrialized countries, racially marginalized women and girls often have less access to social services, health services and live in sub-standard housing. As a result, they are less resilient during and after extreme weather events like floods. Migrants and refugees who flee their climate-affected countries will face challenges as they are the first to lose their jobs during financial downturns.

Rural women in the region mostly work as unpaid family workers or as paid agricultural workers with minimal and seasonal income. It is estimated that women own only 5% of the agricultural land in the Arab region. In Egypt has the oldest agricultural system women own only 5 percent of the land. In Tunisia, women own less than 14%. In Lebanon, they own 7.1%, and in Saudi Arabia women own 8%. The percentage of women in the agricultural labour force in the Arab region has risen sharply over recent decades, from about 30% in 1980 to 45% (in 2010), which is faster than in any other region of the world. In some countries of the region because of male migration and because of armed conflict, women make up more than 60% of the agricultural labour force, giving rise to what has been termed the "feminisation of agricultural labour".

Women in the Arab region like in many other regions are responsible for the production of 60 to 80 percent of food and yet, they rarely own the agricultural land. They work with low tenure security, little decision-making power, and limited control over land use. Socially constructed gender roles, unequal access to land administration, as well as discriminatory practices further limit women's access to and control over land. This is in addition to common land-related patterns reflecting customary and religious laws and practices that emerge in the Arab world as elements that shape the way women can access to use of, and control over land.

women and girls have a right to fully participate in efforts to achieve climate justice as equal rights holders and agents of change. If climate mitigation and adaptation and resilience building are to succeed for the society as a whole, women must have equal decision-making power to deliver effective and durable solutions to the climate crisis.

Moreover, women's suffering increases because of unpaid care work within the domestic space as they bear the burden of providing for the needs of all their family members and managing the limited resources available to them in ensuring their safety and health. These burdens are aggravated by climate change, as well as the failures of public policies and programs that consider the needs of the most marginalized groups, including the needs of women and girls.

(We commit to) Facilitate women's economic inclusion, including investment in the care economy and support for women entrepreneurs.
(p.6, Our Common Agenda, UN, 2021)

POLICY DIRECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the need for a) acknowledgement of the vital role women play in climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience building, b) the disproportionate impact of climate related disasters and displacement on women and girls, d) the need for a gender-sensitive climate financing architecture, and e) the positive impact of ensuring women's participation from underrepresented groups such as indigenous and rural women and those in low-income, ecologically vulnerable environments.

This section reflects many recommendations made by women's groups such as those reported in "Climate Justice and Women's Participation in the Arab region," a collective effort by the Arab States Civil Society Organizations and Feminist Networks. Statements by the Women's major group, African Feminist Taskforce and the Women's Constituency as well as the author's views are also reflected below.

A. Representation and Decision Making

Recommendations:

- Climate finance organizations should improve their gender-balance and equal decision-making roles for women. This should occur in cities, counties, and regional levels as well as at national and international levels.

- Governments should commit to women's equal participation and leadership during UN climate negotiations in adaptation, mitigation and resilience building as well as

in technology, financing, implementation, and integration of the SDGs into climate policies.

- Civil society organizations—particularly feminist and women's groups — should have timely and equal access to data and information so they can hold governments accountable to deliver on climate actions.

- As Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are revised, these should include more engagement with civil society and ensure gender-responsive approaches to climate mitigation and adaptation. Cities should be engaged in the formulation as well as implementation of NDCs, ensuring gender equality and women's leadership at the local level.

B. Data for Gender Justice

Recommendations:

- Efforts must be made to make full use of existing data sources such as the Social Institutions Gender Index (SIGI),[12] which documents discriminatory social institutions affecting women's and girls' lives, the Gender Empowerment Measure,[13] and the Women, Peace and Security Index.[14] In addition, the Gender Inequality Index (GII) reflects unsecured adaptive capacity in climate-vulnerable countries.[15]

- Governments and civil society should also consider new indicators such as the UNEP/IUCN proposed 18 gender-environment indicators. These highlight the right to land, natural resources, and biodiversity; access to food, energy, water, and sanitation; climate change, sustainable production and consumption, and health; and women in environmental decision-making at all levels.[16]

- Data from cities can be used to measure the impact of new climate and environment policies on women's human rights. These should ensure an intersectional analysis, recognizing multiple layers of gender-based discrimination such as by race, age, disability, ethnicity, religious, socio-economic, and migrant status.

12 https://www.genderindex.org/

13 The World Economic Forum. The Global Gender Gap Insight Report (2108)

14 Georgetown Institute for *Women Peace and Security and Peace Research Institute Oslo. Women, Peace, and Security Index 2019/20: Tracking Sustainable Peace through Inclusion, Justice, and Security for Women.* (GIWPS and PRIO, 2019).

15 At present there is no standard gender data for indicators under eight of the nine environment-related SDGs. Within the gender-related SDG framework Data is systematically available for only one of the two unique gender-environment indicators, under SDG Target 9.5.See: Climate Justice and Women's Participation in the Arab region, Policy paper, Arab States Civil Society Organizations and Feminist Networks, June 2022.

16 https://www.unep.org/resources/report/gender-and-environment-statistics-unlocking-information-action-and-measuring-sdgs

C. Adaptation and Mitigation

Recommendations:

- Concerning land rights, governments must respect rural communities' rights to full control of their agriculture and indigenous seed and food systems, as well as traditional farmers' rights as espoused in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.[17]

- Adaptation and mitigation finance should address the injustices that underlie climate vulnerability related to women's limited access to capital.

- When using an intersectional lens, policies should address how gender intersects with ethnicity, economic assets, and political and social status. This demands a continuous scrutiny of inequalities, their root causes, and their contexts throughout the life cycle.

Governments must respect rural communities' rights to full control of their agriculture and indigenous seed and food systems, as well as traditional farmers' rights as espoused in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

D. Financing

Recommendations:

- Public and private capital flows to climate outcomes need to increase their focus on gender-just mitigation, adaptation, and resilience projects.[18]

- Governments should work with the private sector towards zero-emission, climate-resilient, gender-just projects.

17 Standing in Our Power, 2022 ibid

18 A gender analysis of budget lines across multiple sectors and financial instruments for climate change is needed to ensure gender-sensitive investments in programs for adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer and capacity building across different sectors. See: Climate Justice and Women's Participation in the Arab region, Policy paper, Arab States Civil Society Organizations and Feminist Networks, June 2022.

- Multilateral climate funds should streamline accreditation and approval processes to qualify for adaptation finance.

- National governments should actively engage local communities and organizations in their National Adaptation Plans by building their capacities to collect information and acquire resources to plan and implement adaptation measures. Participatory green budgeting and planning need to be strengthened at all levels.

- Cities — that contribute more than 60 percent of green house and which influence policies for the private sector — should help localize a feminist framework based on human rights to renew local climate governance architecture and help localize a Pact for the Future.

- Civil society groups need to act collectively to obtain accreditation from multilateral funds and collaboratively share the funds and the actions that go with them.[19]

- For grassroots and youth groups, greater efforts need to be made to overcome barriers such as the lack of knowledge about financing source, undue complexity of the funding requirements, and a lack of enabling legislative and regulatory framework.

A holistic approach to gender equality and climate change means that governments must address the power imbalance that shapes social norms, institutions, and laws.

E. Technology

Recommendations:

- Governments must put an immediate halt to the practice of "biopiracy" or the unauthorized appropriation and commercial exploitation of indigenous knowledge and genetic resources from farming and Indigenous communities using intellectual properties. Biopiracy restricts future use of these resources while failing to compensate the communities from which they originate.[20]

19 GAGGA is supported by the government of the Netherlands. https://gaggaalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/PSENG.pdf

20 Standing in Our Power, 2022. ibid

- There must be protection and respect for rural communities' rights to full control of their agriculture and indigenous seed and food systems, as well as traditional farmers' rights as espoused in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

- Private sector investments in mitigation and technology should not be used as replacements for public investments. Maximizing monetary returns on private sector investments means that meeting public welfare needs in the face of the climate crisis is at risk of being undermined. This can result in false solutions and untested, unsustainable, and imposed technological fixes.

Socially constructed gender roles, unequal access to land administration, as well as discriminatory practices further limit women's access to and control over land.

CONCLUSION

A Pact for the Future must recognize that women and girls have a right to fully participate in efforts to achieve climate justice as equal rights holders and agents of change. If climate mitigation and adaptation and resilience building are to succeed for the society as a whole, women must have equal decision-making power to deliver effective and durable solutions to the climate crisis.

However, to ensure women's rights to participate in political change, equal social, legal, and economic rights must be ensured. One of the most universal challenges facing women and girls is gender-based violence (GBV/VAW). This has devastating effects on survivors and the costs are born by the entire society as they are deprived of their freedoms—to get an education, to work where they want, and to access their political, economic, and cultural rights.[21] When GBV/VAW also occurs in the context of wars and conflicts, women and girls suffer even more.

Cross-border dependencies between countries in the region complicate responses to the climate crisis.

21 IPU reports that the number of countries with no women in governments increased in 2021. However, women in politics report threats of death, rape, beatings, or abduction. IPU reports, 2019 and 2021.

A holistic approach to gender equality and climate change means that governments must address the power imbalance that shapes social norms, institutions, and laws. As the Arab States Civil Society Organization and Feminist Networks report noted, climate policies and its related institutional architecture should redirect their focus to gender justice and not just gender equity. Finance and actions must reflect representation and decision making of women on all matters and at all levels related to climate change. Gender sensitive data and assessments should be the basis of decision making. "Participation needs to ensure gender just socially sound technology choices with local communities holding their governments accountable. This must occur at local, national, regional, and international levels."[22]

Women in the Arab region like in many other regions are responsible for the production of 60 to 80 percent of food and yet, they rarely own the agricultural land.

Important starting points are the UN policy and legally binding agreements that have set global standards that should be used together in a renewed climate governance architecture. These includes the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Sustainable Development Goals. The UNFCCC and Convention on Biodiversity also make important provisions for gender equality and women's leadership.[23] Furthermore, a participatory, inclusive climate governance architecture based on women's human rights must be localised in cities as well as regional jurisdictions. Only then can Our Common Agenda work towards gender justice for future generations and a sustainable, healthy planet for all.

22 Climate Justice and Women's Participation in the Arab region, Ibid, June 2022

23 A good summary of international agreements on gender, environment and sustainable development can be found in "Strengthening gender considerations in adaption planning and implementation in the least developed countries", UNFCCC, LDC expert group report, 2015.

DUBRAVKA SIMONOVIC, FORMER CHAIR OF CSW, FORMER UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

It is very important to see what the future role of the Commission on the Status of Women and other instruments that we have adopted up to now should be in the implementation of Our Common Agenda. Among these are the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, but there are many others that are at our disposal.

The articles in this book have made very important points related to a platform for synergies between all those instruments that we have developed throughout the years at the UN. Maria Fernanda has also mentioned the reform process-- trying to adjust to realities of today, and the needs of women and girls in different parts of the world. But we are seeing serious backsliding with respect to women's rights. That was recognized by the UN Secretary General in his assessment of the implementation of the SDG agenda, especially Goal Five on achieving gender equality. And it was also mentioned in these papers that there are still discriminatory laws such as patriarchal inheritance rights. There are other discriminatory laws and provisions that are preventing women from enjoying women's rights as human rights. Little wonder that we are so far from our goal to achieve substantive gender equality.

UN member states and civil society must discuss the past of the CSW to understand its future. The CSW was established in 1946 and began its work in 1947. It developed and elaborated all those instruments that we are using today. It was the CSW that established a comprehensive gender equality framework now embodied in CEDAW, the Optional Protocol, and Beijing Platform for Action. From its past works, it helped promote regional instruments that can also be integrated in our work.

But today, we ask: What is the role of the CSW with respect to implementation of those instruments after their adoption? Unfortunately, the CSW changed its role into follow up to implementation rather than being the source for innovative action. And somehow it scaled down a comprehensive overview of different agenda items. In UN revitalization, member states must find a way to reestablish CSW as a platform for accountability to tackle all the issues mentioned in these papers.

As the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women for six years and my participation on numerous expert committees, I saw that there was an insufficient connection between expert

mechanisms and the CSW. For example, when I was the special rapporteur, I elaborated a report about online violence against women a few years ago which could have helped inform the CSW in 2023 as it dealt with digital technology and violence against women and girls online. But the CSW failed to draw upon that report as it has overlooked many others that could help raise its leadership status within the UN system.

In the future, the CSW must strengthen its human rights perspective and include all experts in its work. These could be in the form of interactive panels and discussions around the reports by expert mechanisms which are all sent to CSW but, unfortunately, are seldom discussed.

Most urgently, we need more comparable data and indicators-- those things that will present what is what is happening in different parts of the world in terms of implementation of all those agendas, including those proposed in the OCA.

The OCA calls for an emergency action plan that includes violence against women. Who is going to elaborate that action plan? In my view, the CSW must take the lead and promote other action plans related to women's rights. And although all UN agencies should include the women's rights and gender mainstream into their work, the CSW should be a central one. Each session should open opportunity for all of us to see where we are, how we are progressing, or regressing? The CSW should take responsibility to be the primary platform for all issues and identify the tools that will push implementation of the SDGs and OCA in the right direction.

One last point-- when CSW was established, it was at the same level as the Commission on Human Rights as a functional commission of Economic and Social Council. We have upgraded the commission on human rights into a human rights council. But mechanisms for women's rights were never reformed. Thus, they never had tools and mechanisms to follow up on real implementation at the national level. I believe this is a challenge that should be addressed related to Our Common Agenda.

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