



Information about the Dialogue provided by Global Affairs Canada

Global Affairs Canada: Feminist Foreign Policy Dialogue

Thank you for your contribution to the feminist foreign policy dialogue. We invite you to provide your contribution below, within the five (5)-page limit

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Please indicate if you are submitting this contribution:

- As an individual
- On behalf of an organization
- On behalf of a group of organizations or individuals

Please indicate the areas covered in your contribution:

- Overarching considerations
 - Enhanced diplomatic engagement
 - Women, Peace and Security (WPS)
 - Responding to evolving vulnerabilities
 - Inclusive digital transformation
 - Other: please specify
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Written Contribution:

* Please respect the **five (5)-page limit**

Introduction

Cooperation Canada commends the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Global Affairs Canada for launching the consultation process that will inform Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy. Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) has been praised as a strategic and ambitious policy framework whose success depends on the overall coherence of Canada's foreign policy, linking the pillars of international affairs and diplomacy, international assistance, trade, and peace and security. Ensuring a coherent approach for Canada's efforts on the global stage is also necessary to address key global issues of socio-political and economic inequality, climate change, conflicts, and global health affecting communities everywhere.

Articulating a feminist foreign policy is a complex task, mired in challenges of defining contentious concepts such as "feminism" as well as Canada's envisioned leadership in bilateral and multilateral contexts. Working with our members and partners in the foreign policy community, Cooperation Canada has already signaled ambitions for Canada's global leadership as outlined in [the outcome document from the 2019 Summit on Canada's Global Leadership](#). Canada should build on lessons offered by countries with feminist foreign policies as well as recommendations by academics and civil society representatives engaged in this work.

Cooperation Canada represents over 90 organizations working in international cooperation. Our submission focuses on the overarching principles and opportunities to maximize the impact of Canada's international engagements, and strategies for operationalization of feminist principles.

OVERARCHING CONSIDERATIONS

Recommendation 1: Canada's feminist foreign policy should be human rights-based and guided by efforts towards global solidarity and the priorities of our partners (context-informed)

Canada is a former settler colony on an ongoing yet incomplete path towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, racial justice, gender equality and climate justice. Our global leadership must rest on a humble yet constructive position. Canada does not have all the answers and our feminist foreign policy should strongly recognize this: a feminist foreign policy should not serve as a mandate to impose solutions or norms to actors in historically disadvantaged countries. In this sense, Canada's feminist foreign policy should signal a human rights-based approach grounded in the notion of **global solidarity**, based the recognition that the most marginalized are often most disproportionately affected by global challenges.

Recommendation 2: Explicitly define the guiding principles underpinning Canada's approach to feminism

Guided by a framework of human rights and global solidarity, Canada's feminist foreign policy must clearly spell out feminism tenants that will guide Canada's global engagement. This means building on the transformative approach suggested by the Feminist Foreign Policy Framework of the [International Center for Research on Women](#). Such an approach employs a **human-rights**

and intersectional lens to amplify local voices engaged in shifting harmful gender equality norms that permeate all sectors and societies. Canada's feminist foreign policy should be **transformative, inclusive, but also open to continuous processes of learning from communities it seeks to support** in bilateral and multilateral arenas.

Recommendation 3: Define Canada's feminist leadership as constructive collaboration and effective partnership

Canada has the moral responsibility to help solve global challenges, and political and economic resources to do so. As a G7 country benefitting from unequal geopolitical and economic systems, and one of the world's largest per capita global pollutants, Canada's efforts to help solve global challenges through diplomacy, peace and security interventions, international assistance and trade must be based on the feminist approach to **leadership through collaboration**. The importance of collaborative and integrated approaches is reflected in key global frameworks, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030). Canada should act as a convener, an enabler and a strategic partner of communities that have been historically marginalized, silenced and disadvantaged. By doing so, Canada should join other progressive nations in forging a new, more sustainable and equitable world order through multilateral and bilateral engagements.

Canada's feminist leadership must ensure commitments to global frameworks, such as Agenda 2030, including through adequate funding for official development assistance (ODA). Furthermore, Canada's international partnerships should be diversified across diplomacy, trade, security and international assistance. By transcending single-issue bilateral relationships, Canada's feminist foreign policy would be equipped to address the multitude of global challenges in the current fragmented international order. [Equitable partnerships](#) also require enabling regulatory regimes, which is why Canada's domestic regulations such as those of "direction and control" [require](#) urgent corrective action.

As the current global pandemic of COVID-19 has shown, we are only as strong as our weakest health systems. The same is true for our environmental, economic and socio-political choices: we can choose between being victims of interdependent global systems or we can thrive on collective pursuits of our wellbeing. **Canada's feminist foreign agenda should not outline a prescriptive set of outcomes for the world; it should represent a fundamental shift in our approach to foreign policy systems and processes that allows for more human rights-based, context-informed and equitable solutions.** By centering marginalized voices and employing our country's political and economic position on the global stage, Canada can emerge as a vital champion of a more just, environmentally sustainable and healthier world in the aftermath of COVID-19.

OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF A FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY APPROACH

Recommendation 4: Engage local actors in multilateral and bilateral decision-making processes

In operational terms, Canada's feminist foreign policy approach should build on lessons emerging from FIAP implementation. This means ongoing efforts to amplify feminist voices, including youth voices, on the global stage and advocate for decision-making power of those

most affected by global decision-making processes. Canada's initiatives of engaging, for example, refugee-led organizations in international dialogues on humanitarian interventions, should be scaled up across all foreign policy pillars.

Collaborative leadership means advocating for the integration of non-state actors in key decision-making processes (as well as governments that have been historically marginalized in such processes) and strengthening national and international accountability for commitments made in collaboration with said actors. These values are reflected in global commitments such as that of "localization" outlined in [the Grand Bargain document](#) of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.

When proposing effective solutions and collaborating with others, it is critical that Canada lead by example. This is the case of, for instance, Canada's guidelines for feminist approaches to international assistance in humanitarian contexts, which fill a much needed gap in these global deliberations. Canada's G7 leadership, which resulted in the elaboration of the [Charlevoix Declaration](#) and the [Whistler Declaration](#), are other examples of the normative leadership Canada must continue to demonstrate in multilateral settings. However, the credibility of Canada's feminist approach also relies on leadership at home. Our feminist approach must be applied nationally, including through efforts of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, gender-responsive labour and social safety net policies etc.

In operational terms, this means that Canada's bilateral engagements must also be rooted in mutual trust and efforts to articulate equitable terms of cultural, political and economic exchanges. The role of Canada's missions in implementing a feminist foreign policy must be clear. Missions are strategic actors that should be guided by Canada's feminist aspirations and "soft diplomacy" that amplifies the voices of local and regional feminist actors, centers communities on the margins and consistently informs the government's agenda through consultation with Canadian and local civil society. The [Swedish feminist foreign policy](#) offers strategic and practical examples.

Canada's own approach to international assistance offers further lessons in this regard, as it is consistently [deemed](#) highly principled. In comparison to its peers, Canada ranked fourth this year as a principled provider of ODA (although Canada is generally hindered by below-average funding levels). Canada's support for women's rights organizations through programs such as [Women's Voice and Leadership](#) and the [Equality Fund](#) offer valuable lessons in forging more inclusive and equitable interventions abroad. Canada's feminist foreign policy offers an opportunity to double-down and expand on Canada's existing feminist leadership.

Recommendation 5: Leverage Canada's global position to support the ongoing shift towards more inclusive and context-adapted rules-based international order

The connections with feminist actors Canada forged through its international collaboration should be leveraged in all pillars of foreign policy. Canada has the power to influence the multipolar rules-based international order and its fluid set of international norms. This shift is already occurring: more and more missions are discarding deceptively neutral protocols and systems that perpetuate the inequalities they are expected to counter, acting as cultural hubs, economic accelerators, and dialogue forums.

This is the model Canada should pursue, while consistently supporting staff to contribute to a feminist approach based on long-term and strategic collaboration Canadians would be proud to support. Many of these shifts do not require exorbitant budgets: e.g., already-planned diplomatic mission visits can include consultations with women's rights group and platforms for feminist dialogues and cultural exchange; mission premises can be offered to feminist civil society actors for their coordination purposes; consular services can be adapted to reflect gendered cultural practices and offer psycho-social support to victims of violence seeking repatriation in Canada. Ensuring more malleable processes of Canada's High Commission offices globally, and sensitizing Heads of Missions about gender-responsive and context-informed office protocols would engender innovation and operationalize feminist principles.

Recommendation 6: Define concrete steps to ensure policy coherence across trade, defense, peace efforts, diplomacy, and international assistance

Canada's feminist foreign policy should ensure coherence across all of its key pillars. Canada's global engagement is not always mutually reinforcing. For example, Canada is one of the greatest donors to Yemen, a country whose population is currently facing famine, cholera, COVID-19, in addition to conflict and other repercussions of instability and poverty. These donations, however, [pale in comparison](#) to Canada's historical trade deal with Saudi Arabia, which is resulting in repeated human rights abuses in the country. Similarly, [Canada's support for Canadian mining companies abroad, with a long track record of human rights abuses](#), is difficult to reconcile with a feminist approach and the reconciliation with Indigenous communities at home and abroad. The recent decision of the Ministry of International Trade to de-prioritize the establishment of a human-rights Ombudsperson office with the power to hold Canadian companies abroad accountable for human rights violations stands in stark contrast with to a feminist approach to foreign policy and civil society appeals for responsible business conduct.

Canada stands to gain from greater policy coherence, which can be achieved through principles of social justice, demilitarization, and [environmental justice](#). For example, Canada is a potential leader in the area of green energy as well as technological and agricultural innovation. Especially in regions projected to see high population growth and a lack of sustainable and equitable foreign investments, [such as Sub-Saharan Africa](#), Canada can and should form equitable trade and security relationships. Canada's recent [Bill C-12](#), committing the country to net-zero emissions by 2050, can serve as a critical example in the country's global engagement, forging a path towards a greener, safer world for us all.

Recommendation 7: Ensuring a “triple nexus” approach to all areas of feminist foreign policy to allow for locally informed, coherent approaches

Canada's leadership around the [Women, Peace and Security agenda](#) has left a lasting impact on the global stage. By appointing an Ambassador to support feminist approaches to conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict state building, Canada has become one of the leading voices in the global endeavor of re-conceptualizing inclusive peace processes. Canada's efforts of the [prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse](#) particularly among peacekeepers and international civil servants is another vital good practice.

Notwithstanding these efforts, the coherence of Canada's foreign policy is key for leveraging limited resources and global influence to maximize the impact on multilateral and bilateral stages. Canada should work with like-minded countries to articulate more integrated and people-centered approaches in all areas of foreign policy. The 'triple nexus' objective of the UN reform, linking peace, humanitarian and long-term development areas of interventions offers an important area for Canada to make progress under a [New Way of Working](#).

MEASURING THE IMPACT OF FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY APPROACHES

Recommendation 8: Measure progress against Canada's feminist foreign policy through quantitative and qualitative metrics, informed by experts and partners

To guarantee a systematic and sustainable shift in Canada's foreign policy processes, clear benchmarks and accountability mechanisms must be provided for both internal processes and external support of feminist actors. To avoid indicator-driven approaches that obfuscate the agenda of local actors, especially those already on the margins of economic and political discourses, Canada's feminist foreign policy should be reported on [through quantitative and qualitative measures alike](#). Qualitative reporting is critical to capturing how Canada's efforts are qualitatively different under a feminist foreign policy approach, complementing quantitative figures. A feminist approach to monitoring and evaluation should also amplify the feedback from local communities the policy itself aims to support, as well as identify areas of improvement to ensure constant learning within the context of Canada's feminist foreign policy.

In designing new structures and processes to enable a feminist approach, Canadian and local civil society organizations, youth groups, and academics should be consulted.

Recommendation 9: Develop accountability systems for feminist change and leadership

Drawing on the [Swedish example](#), benchmarks for internal processes of organizational change could include resources allocated to system-wide shifts, improved diversity and gender quotas, particularly for staff in leadership positions, clear guidance for staff at all levels, as well as clear accountability indicators integrated in performance reviews of staff in leadership positions, such as Heads of Missions. In terms of support for feminist agendas abroad, benchmarks should consider the flexible and predictable funding for feminist actors, co-construction of global and local policies aimed at gender equality, platforms for dialogue and exchange that promote feminist principles, number and quality of consultations with local civil society actors and so on. These benchmarks should be followed by qualitative data to allow for continuous learning.

Closing note

Overall, Canada cannot solve current global challenges alone. However, through a measurable, human rights-based, feminist foreign policy that promotes global solidarity, collaborative global leadership, ensures policy coherence and supports diverse and inclusive localization, Canada has an opportunity to influence approaches to global challenges at multilateral and bilateral levels. Canada's international cooperation sector looks forward to supporting the rollout of Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy.