

JANUARY 2021



WHAT WE  
HEARD

Feedback from  
discussions on **Canada's  
feminist foreign policy**

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Foreign Policy Working Group

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For more background the Feminist Foreign Policy discussions (including many of the submissions from civil society organizations), see: [www.amnesty.ca/ffp](http://www.amnesty.ca/ffp)

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## Acronyms

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CGE	Computable General Equilibrium
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
Eurodad	European Network on Debt and Development
FIAP	Feminist International Assistance Policy
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
GBA+	Gender-Based Analysis Plus
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
YPS	Youth, Peace and Security

# 1. Introduction

In February 2020, then-Minister of Foreign Affairs François-Philippe Champagne publicly committed to working with civil society to develop a statement on Canada's feminist foreign policy.<sup>1</sup>

In October 2020, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) solicited views on the subject from stakeholders in Canada and around the world—including civil society—and released a 'scene setter'/background paper<sup>2</sup> highlighting activities Canada has undertaken to implement its feminist foreign policy, and areas to explore in the development of the policy statement. These areas include: enhanced diplomatic engagement; women, peace and security; responding to evolving vulnerabilities; and inclusive digital transformation.

As part of Global Affairs Canada's engagement process, the Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group<sup>3</sup> hosted a series of online conversations with civil society representatives interested in this topic. Global Affairs Canada provided some financial support for the conversations, which were organized by Working Group members. Activities included:

- Preparation of a background discussion document and reading list;<sup>4</sup>
- Hosting three invitation-only thematic virtual roundtable discussions on human rights, economic justice and sustainability, and peace and security;
- Hosting a virtual roundtable discussion with international activists and experts in feminist foreign policy;
- Hosting a virtual roundtable discussion with feminist youth focused on taking an intersectional approach to feminist foreign policy;
- Hosting two virtual, bilingual public webinars; and
- Creating a webpage to host written and video submissions from the public and civil society organizations.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Global Affairs Canada, "Address by Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations, February 21, 2020, [www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2020/02/address-by-minister-of-foreign-affairs-to-the-montreal-council-on-foreign-relations.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2020/02/address-by-minister-of-foreign-affairs-to-the-montreal-council-on-foreign-relations.html).

2 Global Affairs Canada, "Scene-setter: Feminist Foreign Policy Dialogue," October 2020, [www.amnesty.ca/sites/default/files/Canada-and-Feminist-Foreign-Policy-Reading-List%20%281%29.pdf](http://www.amnesty.ca/sites/default/files/Canada-and-Feminist-Foreign-Policy-Reading-List%20%281%29.pdf).

3 The Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group is an informal network of civil society organizations and academics. Members include Above Ground, Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, Amnesty International Canada, the Equality Fund, Equitas, Inter Pares, the Joint Chair in Women's Studies at Carleton University and Ottawa University, Mines Action Canada, Oxfam Canada, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and the Department of Political Science at Carleton University.

4 See Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group, "Conversations on Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy: Background Document," November 2020, [www.amnesty.ca/sites/default/files/CSO%20Backgrounder%20Canada%20FFP.pdf](http://www.amnesty.ca/sites/default/files/CSO%20Backgrounder%20Canada%20FFP.pdf); and Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group, "Canada and Feminist Foreign Policy Reading List," November 2020, [www.amnesty.ca/sites/default/files/Canada-and-Feminist-Foreign-Policy-Reading-List%20%281%29.pdf](http://www.amnesty.ca/sites/default/files/Canada-and-Feminist-Foreign-Policy-Reading-List%20%281%29.pdf).

5 See [www.amnesty.ca/ffp](http://www.amnesty.ca/ffp).

## About this report

The Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group hosted seven online webinars/roundtables in November and December 2020. Approximately 183 people from over 15 countries participated.<sup>6</sup>

This report includes a summary of feedback received during the webinars regarding the core principles of a feminist foreign policy and how Canada can translate these principles into concrete actions to further gender equality and feminist objectives. Quotes from participants are included throughout. This report is a product of a collaborative review of the webinar discussions by members of the Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group. However it is important to point out that although we have attempted to convey the depth and richness of the discussions, not every member of the Working Group will necessarily agree with all of the recommendations.

Webinar participants shared a diversity of perspectives and there were, at times, disagreements. This report in no way strives to find consensus on various approaches that Canada could take in implementing its feminist foreign policy. Rather, it reflects the analysis, perspectives, and recommendations that were shared during the webinars.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to do a quantitative analysis of how many times a specific issue or recommendation was made. Participants were encouraged not to duplicate what others had said with the goal of digging as deeply as possible into the content in the limited time available.

The Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group extends its gratitude and appreciation to webinar participants who devoted so much time and expertise to this process. We would like to thank the Government of Canada for providing resources to help support some of the webinars.

## Challenges and limitations of the engagement process

The Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group engaged with civil society organizations, activists, and academics in Canada and around the world over a short period of time during a global pandemic to organize and carry out the webinars. Interest in supporting the development of Canada's feminist foreign policy was high. However, two critical factors influenced participation in the webinars:

- **Compressed time frame:** Stakeholders were notified about the engagement process by Global Affairs Canada on October 29. They had until November 30 to make a written submission to Global Affairs Canada. Webinars organized by the Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group were held from November 10 to December 2, 2020. Participants often received webinar invitations only 1-2 weeks in advance. The engagement period coincided with the annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign and what is one of the busiest times of year for stakeholders. The compressed time frame at such a busy time of year

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<sup>6</sup> See Annex 1 of this report for further information about the webinars.

limited the number, depth, and scope of conversations. It also limited the participation of some stakeholders and in particular those from smaller organizations. It limited the time available to implement a robust outreach strategy to ensure that webinar participants reflected the diversity of civil society.

- **Limited organizational resources:** These engagement sessions sought to engage organizations working with feminist perspectives and/or analysis. Most of these stakeholders are under-resourced organizations. Some do not work full time on foreign policy issues and others have limited capacity to engage with policy issues. Many are dealing with capacity issues directly related to the pandemic. It was a challenge for some organizations to pivot their work and add capacity to engage in the discussions on feminist foreign policy. In some cases, organizations would have needed funding to add staff capacity to learn more about feminist foreign policy before participating in a webinar. This is particularly the case for organizations whose perspectives on feminist foreign policy are incredibly valuable (and often not heard), but who may not see their work through a foreign policy lens.

## 2. Principles of a feminist foreign policy

The Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group initially proposed six core principles of a feminist foreign policy to participants in each online conversation.<sup>7</sup> Webinar participants discussed, validated, and expanded upon the set of principles. The following is a revised set of core principles to support the development and implementation of Canada's feminist foreign policy.

### Canada's feminist foreign policy upholds policy coherence

Participants in the engagement sessions overwhelmingly stressed the importance of ensuring a coherent feminist approach across all areas of Canada's international relations and activities without exception. This includes diplomacy, consular services, trade, development assistance, immigration and refugee policy, security and defense, environmental justice and climate change, and sustainable development. It is not sufficient to silo each area of foreign policy. There are inextricable connections between, for example, climate change and gender equality, and the inherent connections between each thematic area of foreign policy must also be recognized and responded to in a feminist foreign policy.

<sup>7</sup> The original six core principles proposed to participants were: demands policy coherence; takes a rights-based approach; integrates intersectionality, diversity and inclusivity; dismantles colonial legacies; promotes demilitarization; and follows process principles and accountability. See Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group, "Conversations on Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy: Background Document," November 2020, [www.amnesty.ca/sites/default/files/CSO%20Backgrounder%20Canada%20FFP.pdf](http://www.amnesty.ca/sites/default/files/CSO%20Backgrounder%20Canada%20FFP.pdf).

### THE CORE PRINCIPLES OF A FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

1. Canada's feminist foreign policy upholds policy coherence
2. Canada's feminist foreign policy includes transformational objectives and is informed by the priorities and perspectives of feminist movements in Canada and around the world
3. Canada's feminist foreign policy is non-partisan
4. Canada's feminist foreign policy is clearly rights-based
5. Canada's feminist foreign policy adopts an intersectional approach, giving priority to equity, diversity and inclusion
6. Canada's feminist foreign policy promotes demilitarization, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and non-violence
7. Canada's feminist foreign policy promotes the protection of the environment and sustainable development
8. Canada's feminist foreign policy follows feminist processes and promotes accountability



In addition, it is not sufficient to have a signature initiative or to highlight Canada's feminist approach only when women and girls' rights are on the agenda.

Effective foreign policy requires coherence between policies promoted and implemented by Canada domestically and internationally. A consistent feminist approach will ensure credibility and effectiveness of the policy and brings legitimacy to Canada's positioning internationally as a feminist government. For example, Canada must concretely address systemic racism and ongoing rights violations experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada in addition to championing Indigenous rights in multilateral fora such as the United Nations. One participant remarked that "Canada's policy and practice across the board should be in compliance with international law."

*"It is a bit frightening to see a country that does not have a feminist national policy in so many ways, go abroad and position itself as a kind of leader or a feminist expert."*

Aligning domestic and international policy is also critical as it applies to Canada's approach to human rights defenders. These are voices at risk as the global space for civil society to peacefully advocate for human rights shrinks, and a feminist foreign policy recognizes that both internationally and domestically. Human rights defenders in exile in Canada should be able to continue to carry out their work in safety and dignity, with access to critical social and economic supports, and opportunities to engage in policymaking and other opportunities to contribute to the feminist foreign policy objectives of social justice, equity, and transformation.

*"A feminist analysis [of foreign policy] would find it problematic to advocate for change outside of Canada if we don't practice this change inside - and vice versa."*

## **Canada's feminist foreign policy includes transformational objectives and is informed by the priorities and perspectives of feminist movements in Canada and around the world**

The feminist foreign policy will be measured on its ability to guide significant and measurable change in transforming power dynamics and reducing gender inequalities. This type of transformational change cannot happen through a few simple actions or flagship initiatives. To create lasting, meaningful change, a feminist foreign policy must be applied in a principled way to all decisions a country makes. It must serve as a guide for taking action particularly when this action may be deemed challenging or unpopular. For example, to implement its feminist foreign policy, Canada must clearly prioritize human rights over economics in relationships with states and corporations.

*"If Canada can show that it will speak out in support of human rights, and be feminist, when it's hard as well as when it's easy, then I will know that this [process] is transformational and Canada's feminist foreign policy means something"*

This transformational aspiration challenges the tenants of the traditional Global North/Global South framing of international relations which serves to maintain colonial structures. Feminist foreign policy aims to remove economic, social-cultural, and political systems that perpetuate colonial violence and imperial practices underpinning current debt repayment models, aid, trade negotiations, and approaches to peace and security. Feminist policies strive to break down institutionalized racism and act to heal the harm caused by racial violence embedded in foreign relations. By working within the framework of a feminist foreign policy, Canada would do all it can to ensure that feminism does not reproduce colonial oppression and would refrain from imposing its own model or definition of feminism on women and non-binary persons living in other countries. A feminist foreign policy recognizes feminisms in plural rather than only one feminism.

*"We're all hoping that this feminist foreign policy doesn't create a feminist veneer to an existing, 'business as usual' policy by this government...And I think what that requires is for the government to be willing to make unpopular decisions and statements. It can be popular to have a global conference on women's rights. That can be a popular position and one that improves and increases this government's standing globally, but that's not nearly enough. What the government has to be willing to do is to be unpopular. Make strong statements condemning abuses in Saudi Arabia, abuses by the extractive industries, etc."*

## Canada's feminist foreign policy is non-partisan

To truly uphold transformational objectives and create meaningful change requires time. It will take years of principled action for a feminist foreign policy to help reduce gender inequalities. To ensure that a feminist foreign policy can withstand the test of time it is critical it be non-partisan, and not seen to be associated with any individual, government, or political party. Ideally the policy is enshrined in legislation and able to withstand a change of government.

*"The government needs to take an active role in saying we don't want the feminist foreign policy to be a Liberal legacy, we want it to be a Canadian legacy, a Canadian identity."*

## Canada's feminist foreign policy is clearly rights-based

By virtue of being party to international human rights treaties, the Canadian government and public institutions are accountable to upholding international human rights law in their policies and practices. A feminist foreign policy is grounded in international human rights norms and standards which are championed internationally and fully implemented domestically. It also recognizes that international human rights law is not static and supports the evolution of international human rights law to better promote gender equality.

It is incumbent on government to consider the multiplicity of experiences among different groups, as people experience discrimination differently based on the intersection of their identities. For example, the International Criminal Court was created without explicit consideration of the diverse experiences of women, girls, LGBTI, Black, Indigenous, People of Colour, immigrants, and people with disabilities. As a result, it has struggled to adequately address rights violations experienced by these groups, including gender-based violence.

Central to a rights-based approach to feminist foreign policy is the imperative to 'do no harm.' A feminist foreign policy must not cause harm by perpetuating inequalities. To ensure this, the policy must be driven by rights holders, following the principle of 'nothing about us, without us.'

*"I would like to suggest that we consider expanding the rights-based approach, to include that we have a founding principle of policy being driven by rights holders, and particularly those rights holders who are directly impacted by policy. Too often, I think, we go down a path of reproducing paternalistic and colonial approaches without checking in with folks who are most impacted. I can say coming from a sex worker's rights perspective, that this is something that sex workers globally, see frequently particularly, in regards to what might be well-intentioned anti-human trafficking initiatives."*

A feminist foreign policy recognizes the centrality of the right to bodily autonomy as a human right in achieving gender equality. This includes the rights of individuals to have control over and decide freely on all matters related to sexuality, gender, and reproduction, free from coercion, violence, and discrimination.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, [www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights](http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm); and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, [www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html](http://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html).

## Canada's feminist foreign policy adopts an intersectional approach, giving priority to equity, diversity, and inclusion

An intersectional approach to feminist foreign policy considers the ways in which power structures and systems of oppression overlap, interact, and uniquely shape individual and collective experiences, in particular for women, girls, LGBTI, Black, Indigenous, People of Colour, immigrants, and people with disabilities.

Inclusive feminist foreign policy values collaboration as an essential tool in promoting equality, justice, and human rights. It recognizes the importance of collaborating with a diverse cross-section of civil society and engaging rights holders substantively on issues impacting their lives. This includes substantively engaging people who are impacted by Canada's foreign policy decisions. It also means ensuring gender parity in the leadership and representation of government actors involved in foreign policy design and implementation, as well as a commitment to other meaningful forms of equitable participation based on race, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability, among other identity characteristics.

*"Understanding intersectionality is about understanding how intersecting systems of oppression (colonialism, ableism, racism, capitalism, cisheteropatriarchy) affect folks at the margins. Centering folks at the margins (i.e. queer and trans, Black, Indigenous people of colour with disabilities) should be prioritized in establishing decolonial, anti-oppressive, anti-racism, anti-ableist policies."*

## Canada's feminist foreign policy promotes demilitarization, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and non-violence

The human and economic cost of conflicts and preparation for war is clear. Investments in weapons and militaries dwarf investments in health care and social infrastructure. Narrow definitions of 'national interest' and outdated notions of 'security' are challenged by feminist approaches.

Participants shared differing perspectives on demilitarization and military spending and its framing as a principle. For example, some participants emphasized that demilitarization in foreign policy is necessary in pursuing a truly feminist foreign policy agenda. This ensures that policy discussions move beyond a narrowed understanding of gender equality and women's empowerment to adopt a feminist approach that seeks to address underlying systemic causes of oppression and violence. Other participants prioritized more immediate actions that Canada should take *vis-à-vis* their current military efforts.

Closely linked to the principle of demilitarization is the principle of non-violence. Participants identified non-violence as a principle of feminist foreign policy that requires significant investment in diplomacy, a focus on international law, and the above-mentioned actions towards demilitarization and disarmament. Having non-violence as a cross-cutting principle of Canada's feminist foreign policy will shift the order of potential responses on the international stage.

Understanding that conflict is inherent in society, by upholding this principle the feminist foreign policy would move beyond conflict resolution to the kind of conflict and cultural transformation that would lead to a more just and equal world.

## **Canada's feminist foreign policy promotes the protection of the environment and sustainable development**

Participants recognized the need to include a stand-alone principle around environment and sustainability that would be integrated into all aspects of foreign policy. Canada has an opportunity to ensure a feminist approach to all of its international commitments to protecting the environment and contributing to sustainable development. The importance of environmental protection, immediate action on climate change, and the promotion of sustainable development were emphasized by several participants but there was either lack of time or significant experience/expertise in the groups to elaborate further.

## **Canada's feminist foreign policy follows feminist processes and promotes accountability**

A feminist foreign policy recognizes that processes to ensure accountability and meaningful participation are inextricably linked to results. Prioritizing results over process is incompatible with the tenets of a feminist foreign policy. A feminist approach to process and accountability includes having clear procedures and mechanisms to support the engagement of diverse voices from civil society.

Feminist monitoring and evaluation should be context-specific, participatory, inclusive, and attentive to intersectional power relations. Policy should be evidence-based while recognizing the need for feminist data collection and the engagement of a broad range of stakeholders.

*“How does accountability and...the monitoring of this, move beyond civil society in Canada or actors in Canada...to a much broader swath of civil society and feminist leaders in the Global South? How do they play an active and continuous role in how this policy is shaped, and how the government is held accountable? I like the idea of some UPR mechanism to continually review this policy. ... How does this foster greater international cooperation, and how do you work with other countries such as the ones that are already working on feminist foreign policy? And how do you seek to ensure that that dialogue is increased, that it is also a transparent dialogue, and those efforts are clear?”*

Participants added that a clear and transparent feedback mechanism should be a key component of a feminist foreign policy. This should include government-funded, independent civil society monitoring of the impacts of Canada's feminist foreign policy. This mechanism should also be complemented by ongoing engagement and dialogue with diverse representation from civil society and the general public in Canada through a communications strategy that demystifies and engages Canadians in feminist foreign policy.

Corporate accountability was also mentioned as a necessary addition to this principle, specifically in terms of accounting for the actions and ethical behaviour of Canadian businesses working internationally and the need for further commitment to developing feminist trade guidelines beyond stand-alone chapters on gender equality.

In addition to these primary principles, participants did raise other potential principles. These included the importance of using 'reciprocity,' using an 'anti-capitalist' perspective, and highlighting the use of evidence-based policy making.

**Figure 1: “What words best describe the principles of a feminist foreign policy?” Word Cloud from the roundtable discussion on Peace and Security.**



### 3. Recommendations for Canada's feminist foreign policy

The engagement sessions provided rich and diverse recommendations for the development of Canada's feminist foreign policy. There was clear consensus on many issues, such as the importance of applying feminist perspectives across all areas of Canada's foreign policy, and the critical need to apply an intersectional vision of feminism. There was also a diversity of opinions on priorities and specific next steps, including what actions to prioritize in the coming years to implement the policy. Participants were well aware of the real-world challenges in moving towards more feminist objectives (such as demilitarization) but were also encouraged by the willingness of the government to engage in these important discussions.

Below is a summary of the most frequent recommendations that emerged in the engagement sessions. The recommendations are organized thematically, exploring:

- Transformational approaches and goals;
- Diplomacy;
- Economic and trade policy;
- Peace and security;
- Human rights;
- 'Fit for purpose' government departments;
- Environment; and
- Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and public reporting.

Two initial comments are relevant. First, other than support and funding for women's rights organizations and feminist movements there was little discussion of Canada's development assistance and the role it plays in Canada's feminist foreign policy. This was, in part, because there is a growing body of discussion and analysis of the Feminist International Assistance Policy and participants wanted to focus on other areas of foreign policy that had received less attention. Second, although participants highlighted the importance of addressing the global challenge of climate change, they also acknowledged that more attention and discussions are required within Canadian feminist foreign policy circles to clearly articulate this element.

## Transformational approaches and goals

Participants were hopeful that a feminist foreign policy would contribute to changing systems and practices that are harmful to people and the planet. Many hoped that a feminist foreign policy would address structural inequalities and contribute to a more just and sustainable world for people in Canada and around the world. There were many calls for a foreign policy that takes inspiration from feminist movements and aspirations.

There was a realization on the part of many that a feminist foreign policy would be a marked departure from traditional foreign policies, which emphasize narrowly defined national interests. Yet they held the belief that now is the time to break old paradigms that define what makes us safe as a country.

### i. Work closely with feminist organizations and movements

A feminist foreign policy must be informed by the perspectives, voices, analysis, and priorities of feminist activists. It will be important to develop a collaborative and ongoing relationship with women's rights and LGBTI rights organizations in Canada and around the world. Canada's feminist foreign policy statement could include both resources and a commitment to an engagement process with civil society.

Global Affairs Canada's 'scene setter' document prepared at the outset of the engagement process posed many questions regarding Canada's feminist foreign policy. Due to time constraints, not all of these questions were thoroughly explored. However, these questions could help form the basis of future discussions with feminist activists.

Participants, most notably those located outside Canada, expressed a need for accessible mechanisms for government officials and politicians to engage with civil society on implementation of the policy. These mechanisms could ensure that civil society has access to the full spectrum of people in government, not just gender experts or those leading on feminist foreign policy.

*"The feminist foreign policy won't be successful if it doesn't work with women's organizations, queer organizations, trans organizations, SRHR organizations, both in Canada and globally."*

### ii. Strengthen Gender-Based Analysis Plus and related analytical approaches

A feminist foreign policy requires conceptual clarity. Participants recommended the importance of 'getting the analysis right.' This includes the use of inclusive language, defining feminist approaches, moving away from the simple notion that gender equality only means focusing on 'women and girls,' ensuring intersectional approaches, eliminating binary interpretations of gender, and strengthening the integration of LGBTI issues (rather than seeing this as an 'add-on'). Employing anti-oppression and anti-racist approaches must be more explicit in policy design, formulation, and implementation.



Some participants noted that Canada's Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) and other gender analysis tools "don't go deep enough" and "end up amplifying women's vulnerabilities rather than their resilience."

*"I would also ask to define what feminism is in this context. I feel like we use the word feminism and feminist foreign policy very loosely and all these issues that you've all brought up, gender, sexuality, other marginalized groups. Canada needs a very clear definition of what it intends to do with feminism and its foreign policy."*

### **iii. Increase resources to feminist activists and feminist organizations in Canada and around the world**

The lack of direct investments in feminist (including LGBTI) movements around the world is clear. Feminist change is led by feminist movements. Participants noted that Canada can increase investments in this area and work with others to mobilize more resources globally. Participants noted the importance to ensuring that funding mechanisms are more accessible to gender justice organizations. This includes providing funding for safety and protection, emergency response, and unregistered groups, as well as predictable, long-term, core funding.

### **iv. Pay attention to who is championing Canada's feminist foreign policy**

Who is championing Canada's feminist foreign policy? Are champions reflecting Canada's diversity? Ensure that the voices of racialized women and non-binary people from diverse backgrounds (in Canada and abroad) are meaningfully engaged in the feminist foreign policy.

*"If we really take some time to redefine what that feminist leadership is, and it's not indicator-driven, and it's not linked to Canada pushing an agenda—but rather Canada acting as an amplifier of feminist voices in a global, regional, and national scales—then we're getting somewhere."*

### **v. Be open to the hard discussions**

While there was optimism regarding the transformational potential of a feminist foreign policy, participants were also realistic about the 'real world' trade-offs, tension points, and contradictions. Several participants urged the government to engage in transparent reflections on these tensions, about what is possible in the short term and what is not, and what contributes to progress in the longer term.

*"I don't know that we will transform the world immediately. I think it will be an iterative process. But I think the insistence on policy coherence, and then tools, such as naming limitations when these principles do not necessarily align with policy practice, is a useful way forward. And I would like to congratulate representatives from Global Affairs... for being here today, and being open to that kind of criticism, and open to conversations... I think it's a wonderful feminist practice."*

## Diplomacy

Diplomatic relations—both bilateral and multilateral—are a cornerstone of foreign policy. GAC's consultation 'scene setter' outlines Canadian engagements to date and poses many questions related to enhanced diplomatic engagement.

### **i. Build on existing initiatives such as the upcoming Generation Equality<sup>9</sup> forum**

Participants noted that Canada has led on a number of key files related to gender equality and recommended continued and expanded engagement. For example, Canada's leadership in Action Coalition 6 (of the Generation Equality process) is an excellent opportunity to promote (and model) efforts to rebalance power disparities and invest in feminist movements at home and abroad.

### **ii. Lead by example**

Participants over and over highlighted the importance of 'do as I do,' often using the short-hand phrase 'policy coherence.' Our actions must rise to our rhetoric.

Canada does not have to be 'perfect' to have a successful feminist foreign policy, but we do have to avoid the trap of keeping our 'feminist' credentials to the level of policy language with actions lagging behind. Participants pointed out the importance of consistency with Canadian policies (in particular the slow progress in implementing the recommendations of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls<sup>10</sup>), putting resources behind the feminist foreign policy, and ensuring a feminist approach across all areas of foreign policy (even when it is difficult and uncomfortable).

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9 See <https://forum.generationequality.org/>.

10 See <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>.

### **iii. Continue to engage with multilateral institutions and identify opportunities to advance gender equality initiatives**

Canada has a reputation of supporting gender equality initiatives in the boards and leadership fora of multilateral institutions and UN entities. A feminist foreign policy would enhance this engagement. We would have much to gain from documenting lessons learned from these initiatives.

*"I think [Canada's] potential leadership role could be with their work with the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the ratification and implementation of ILO standards. They already provide a very good and productive role in advancing feminist approaches...the most concrete example is Canada's leadership in the negotiations of the recent convention on violence and harassment in the world of work. Now, we need to ratify that convention so that we can continue our leadership and set a good example."*

### **iv. Increase support, including financial resources, for international and regional human rights treaties' bodies and instruments**

Canada could play a key leadership role in reinforcing the processes upheld by the international and regional human rights treaties' bodies and instruments. This includes but is not limited to, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

### **v. Advocate for 'civil society space'**

Participants noted concerns regarding attacks on the rights of women and LGBTI people and the growing conservative/populist/nationalist movements in parts of the world. They noted that feminist organizations and gender justice movements face attack and repression. Female politicians face more threats and dangers than their male counterparts. Global diplomacy for human rights and civil society 'space' is much needed. They highlighted the importance of protecting digital spaces as well.

*"Right now, what we see is an environment where safe space is shrinking, and where violence and repression are becoming the norm. So I think the key principle, is how feminist foreign policy contributes to create an enabling environment for participation, democracy, respect for human rights and all the rest."*

## Economic and trade policy

A feminist foreign policy tackles inequalities and centers the most marginalized. As such, economic justice and decolonization are at the heart of a feminist foreign policy. This requires policy coherence across all foreign policy areas to work towards a more inclusive and equitable global economic model with an emphasis on uplifting the most marginalized. Canada should play a leadership role in supporting the development and implementation of international agreements and standards that expand economic rights, such as those established by the ILO, UNCTAD, SDGs, CEDAW and UNDRIP. Economic justice recognizes the role colonization has played in setting up key mechanisms and systems around trade, taxation, and finance that continue to undermine the economic development of low-income countries and perpetuate deep seated inequalities.

### i. Include stronger gender analysis and provisions in trade agreements

Trade is an important policy tool that has the potential to advance gender equality and human rights. However, this often remains an after-thought and provisions that have been included are voluntary and aspirational rather than binding and enforced. While some progress has been made to include gender equality considerations within trade policies<sup>11</sup> these have been negotiated with smaller, more amenable countries rather than major trading partners and gender has not been mainstreamed throughout all chapters of agreements but left as a standalone piece. Anti-racist and anti-oppressive approaches should be imbedded in all trade relations and transactions.

Other recommendations included: carrying out both *ex ante* AND *ex post* analysis; moving beyond purely quantitative models (CGE modelling techniques) to include a social accountability framework (see UNCTAD gender toolbox<sup>12</sup>); eliminating Investor State Dispute Settlement clauses; avoid signing trade agreements with governments engaged in misogynistic, racist, homophobic policies (e.g. Brazil under Bolsonaro); adopting procurement policies that permit domestic policies that favour purchases from firms that respect gender equality, Indigenous, Black, and women-owned firms; and supporting cooperatives and credit unions that work to democratize the economy and make resources available to marginalized groups.

*"Investor-state Dispute Settlement is a major concern that hasn't been looked at a lot. What are the gender implications of giving corporations more rights to sue governments? What are the implications for the environment, and labour unions, and Indigenous people, and why do we need to include these provisions? Essentially, we have a situation where investor and corporate rights are enshrined in trade agreements but gender rights and human rights are secondary."*

11 See, for example, Global Affairs Canada, "Trade and gender in free trade agreements: The Canadian approach," [www.international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/gender\\_equality-egalite\\_genres/trade\\_gender\\_fta-ale-commerce\\_genre.aspx?lang=eng](http://www.international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/gender_equality-egalite_genres/trade_gender_fta-ale-commerce_genre.aspx?lang=eng).

12 <https://unctad.org/webflyer/unctad-trade-and-gender-tool-box>

*"A major shortcoming of Canada's approach thus far is the fact that the gender provisions included in trade agreements are standalone, that is, we've been unable to mainstream gender across trade agreements."*

*"Women's work in the informal economy needs to be front and center in guiding our feminist trade policies."*

## **ii. Prioritize economic justice over a narrow vision of 'economic empowerment'**

One of the common challenges repeatedly raised was the distinction between the individualistic nature of economic empowerment commonly reflected in government statements and policies and international assistance and the need to re-direct attention towards a more collective approach to economic justice. Referring to the Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP), several trade and feminist policy advisors suggested that the policy's reference to economic empowerment of women and girls does not explicitly address the underlying systemic barriers that prevent the distribution of equitable economic benefits and the need to tackle the systemic discrimination of entire groups of people.

*"So if we're looking at what needs to be brought to the table, it really is that broader systemic view, one that looks at economic justice as an outcome, as supposed to economic growth or economic empowerment."*

*Economic justice is about prioritizing "the needs and realities of the people who are most impacted negatively by inequalities (...) marginalized women, informal workers, domestic workers, Indigenous women, women with disabilities, racialized women, and so on."*

## **iii. Recognize and promote the redistribution of care labour and the reduction of unpaid care labour**

Participants emphasized that a feminist foreign policy that gives primacy to economic justice must address the need to recognize, redistribute, and reduce paid and unpaid care labour and ensure the representation and adequate remuneration of care workers. Worker's rights are paramount when it comes to addressing the looming care crisis. By leaving care to market forces, care is provided in poor quality and under poor working conditions. One participant mentioned the importance of public investment in social services and protections. Another participant agreed, emphasizing that 'building back better' must include investments in social infrastructure that provide essential services critical to addressing poverty and inequality.

#### **iv. Value and support the role of civil society organizations in realizing economic justice**

Webinar discussants highlighted the importance of recognizing the progress achieved through organizing—feminist, labour, economic rights, etc., where state support was lacking. They called for support to women's groups that are fighting for the economic empowerment of women, labour rights of women especially in the informal sector and the care economy. Others emphasized the importance of having women involved in shaping feminist foreign policy and providing civil society organizations a seat at the table in ongoing global negotiations.

*"Canada can also show the way in ensuring that women's rights groups, in their full diversity, are really included in meaningful consultations and participation in all financing for development, tax, climate discussions, etc."*

#### **v. Strengthen corporate accountability mechanisms**

Corporate accountability related to resource extraction industries was highlighted in all of the roundtables and webinars as an urgent priority. While Canada is a leader in the global extractive sector, it has failed to show leadership on corporate accountability. Corporate accountability needs to include analysis of gender-based discrimination in its approaches to business and human rights. Canada needs to address the weaknesses of the ombudsperson's office it recently created, including the office's inability to effectively investigate or apply sanctions.

*"The absence of effective corporate accountability measures is a real barrier to achieving our feminist foreign policy goals."*

*We must adopt legislation "that would require companies to identify, prevent, mitigate and address human rights abuse" and that includes "measures to hold companies liable if they fail to prevent harm".*

#### **vi. Reform the global tax regime**

Participants emphasized the need to reform the global tax system so that its benefits are more equitably distributed between the global North and South. This includes stronger measures to crack down on tax havens and tax evasion. Canada must take leadership to promote international initiatives that level the playing field for developing countries. A participant also noted the importance of policies to ensure progressive taxation of corporations, including the large digital firms.

*"[Canada] has a particularly important role to play in modeling progress but as you know, it has been really reluctant. Clearly, it has not stepped forward to join many international initiatives. Not only on tax capture and tax havens and the like, but also to move forward with much more effective transnational taxation regimes that would generate revenues for countries to be able to sustain (...) women's economic equality."*

## **vii. Support measures to address the international debt crisis**

It is critical that Canada takes leadership to reduce the debt crisis that is plaguing many low-income countries and stifles their ability to provide essential public services. It should advocate for measures like Special Drawing Rights by the IMF to provide a lifeline to developing countries struggling with the fallout of the pandemic. Others mentioned Canada's responsibility to push for feminist policies at the multilateral development banks and other international financial institutions to oppose austerity measures, which disproportionately hurt women who rely on public services as beneficiaries and employment.

*"The way Canada uses its influence in the international financial institutions (...) could be one of the most significant things that Canada could do, and certainly, one of the most impactful changes as implied by feminist analysis in foreign policy."*

*"The IMF managing director said in September at the Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 And Beyond meeting, that a post COVID recovery must avoid increasing inequality and in particular, gender inequality. Meanwhile, a recent Eurodad report revealed that multilateral plans for the next decade will lock eighty some countries, developing countries, into a debt and austerity crisis between now and 2030."*

## **Peace and security**

Participants across the roundtables were very interested in the concept of foreign policy and 'security,' stressing the importance of moving beyond traditional foreign policy paradigms that narrowly defined 'security' and 'national interest' by placing primacy on military solutions and investments. While there was not always consensus on what the 'next steps' are, there was agreement that demilitarization is a key feminist goal along with supporting peaceful alternatives to armed conflicts.

Participants noted Canada's leadership on the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and urged that this be broadened and expanded. They pointed out that many lessons on how to bring a gender perspective to new areas of foreign policy could be learned by looking at Canada's work on gender and disarmament, gender and digital security, etc. There were also recommendations to ensure that this work was based on commitments to, and investment in, conflict prevention and disarmament.

### **i. Take a leadership role in disarmament**

Participants often spoke of concrete disarmament and demilitarization initiatives as key actions required by a feminist foreign policy. Multiple participants were very clear that a feminist foreign policy will require Canada to reconsider its position regarding the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and join the Treaty as soon as possible.

The need for new international law to address concerns about fully autonomous weapons was also cited as a key aspect for a feminist foreign policy. This is referenced in the Foreign Minister's Mandate Letter and Canada should be leading on this issue. Other concerns about the intersection of new technology, surveillance equipment, and arms control were also shared during the roundtable.

### **ii. Promote demilitarization**

The need to shift resources away from the military under a feminist foreign policy was addressed by a number of participants. Other participants questioned the meaning of demilitarization, its relevance to a feminist foreign policy, and whether it is possible in our current political structure.

Concrete recommendations under this topic included cancelling upcoming procurement of fighter jets, reducing military spending (as recommended by the UN Secretary-General in his 2020 report on women, peace and security),<sup>13</sup> redirecting funding from the military to diplomacy, reducing the reliance on the military to carry out non-military functions such as humanitarian response, and increasing peace research and training within Canada.

### **iii. Lead by example and be coherent**

Many participants stated that stronger export controls are needed on weapons to ensure that Canada is not arming states who are committing human rights violations. Canada's strong language in support of gender equality, human rights, protection of civilians, and the rules-based international order should be supported by export controls on military materials and arms, not undermined by such transfers. Export controls is an area where Canada should be leading by example when it comes to a feminist foreign policy.

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13 United Nations Security Council, "Women and peace and security: report of the Secretary-General," S/2020/946, 25 September 2020, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2020/946>.



*"[It is important] that arms exports aren't sent to a country that doesn't respect women's rights or really fundamentally, undermines them, because I feel like that really undermines our feminist foreign policy approach, and really leads a lot of questions on the global stage."*

Participants noted that Global Affairs Canada and all relevant departments (National Defense, Environment and Climate Change, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship etc.) need "clear instruction and commitment. And that in order for everyone to be on the same page, for clear instructions need to come from the top. And so inclusion in ministerial mandate letters, but also the consideration that it comes from the deputy prime minister or prime minister." Overall, there was strong agreement amongst participants that policy coherence—such as through resolving some of the above contradictions—is a priority.

*"We struggle and everybody on this call struggles with the fact that, we can have a really progressive and formal conversation with [the] foreign ministry, and you can go to another room, and it can either be in the same ministry or a different one, and you have different positions, different ideologies, and different adoptions."*

#### **iv. Continue to promote the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda integrating Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) issues as well**

Participants noted Canada's long history of action on Women, Peace and Security and advancing gender perspectives in disarmament as a good step towards a feminist foreign policy but expressed concern that Canada has not been heavily involved in the Youth, Peace and Security agenda. Both of these international agendas are necessary parts of a feminist foreign policy since they begin to address longstanding concerns about the lack of inclusion. One participant noted that youth make up a large portion of the global population and their involvement in peace and security decision making needs to be supported by a feminist foreign policy.

However, how these agendas are implemented is critical in determining whether or not they are supportive of a feminist foreign policy. Concerns were expressed that merely adding women or youth to current, highly militarized approaches to peace and security does not align with a feminist foreign policy.

#### **v. Question alliances and partnerships**

The topic of NATO came up many times in the Peace and Security roundtable, often in connection with points on demilitarization. There was disagreement on the topic with some participants advocating that Canada should leave NATO, once it fully institutes a feminist foreign policy, while others disagreed and did not see NATO as a challenge to work on women's rights.

*"[a feminist foreign policy] includes questioning NATO's role, and the NATO nuclear umbrella, and the NATO nuclear planning group. ... Even if it's unlikely that we'll see any changes from the Canadian side on [NATO membership], it must be clear that this is a continuous demand from feminist civil society. We, at least, expect a continuous dialogue on this issue."*

In addition to NATO, other alliances and partnerships were discussed in the context of the rules-based international order. Some participants encourage Canada to see new relationships around the common goal of global peace.

*"in order to really be effective, [Canada is] going to have to [...] break with some of their traditional practices, in alliances that they've formed in the international levels, and get more creative about who they're working with. There have been many initiatives on disarmament, over the years, different cross regional groups of states that work really well together, and since the [landmine] treaty Canada hasn't been involved in any of these groups. It hasn't been an active mover with these countries that are really taking the courageous lead in building new rules and norms that are essential to peace and security."*

## Human rights

Participants were very clear about the importance of anchoring a feminist foreign policy in the framework of human rights. Central to a rights-based approach is the imperative to 'do no harm.' A feminist foreign policy must not cause harm by perpetuating inequalities. To ensure this, the policy must be driven by rights holders, following the principle of 'nothing about us, without us.'

### i. Speak out on human rights

In the face of increasing attacks on human rights and human rights defenders, Canada must exercise stronger, more vocal leadership and emphasize the importance of solidarity and multilateralism. Canada should to play a more active role in pushing for feminist policies and preventing backsliding and promoting LGBTI rights in multilateral forums.

*"It is a dangerous time to be a feminist with the increasing politicization of antifeminism, with populist leaders such as Bolsonaro, Trump, with Duterte and Orban, Canada needs to ensure that the policy protects feminist work in Canada and globally."*

## ii. Create human rights ambassadors

Human rights must be a priority in the job description, mandate, and work of Canadian diplomats: all Canadian diplomats must be human rights ambassadors. Canadian missions abroad should have a human rights focal point, and human rights should be prioritized and mainstreamed into all mission activities. Each diplomatic mission currently has a focal point to implement the 'Voices at Risk' guidelines on supporting human rights defenders, but implementation is weak and inconsistent across missions.

## iii. Protect human rights and human rights defenders

Human rights and human rights defenders are under threat and lack support when they seek safe haven in Canada. Canada must do more to promote human rights and to take concrete actions to protect human rights defenders. For example, Canada should openly and unequivocally demand the release of Loujain al-Hathloul, a women's rights activist detained by Saudi authorities since 2018. Greater investments are needed to support activists and prevent the deaths of activists like Sarah Hegazi, an Egyptian LGBTI activist who sought asylum in Canada and died by suicide in 2020. Human rights defenders must be supported while in Canada, engaged in policy development and in their areas of expertise.

*"Personally, I found it a bit disappointing that our former foreign affairs minister went to the Toronto airport to welcome a Saudi young woman who fled her country because of a family dispute, whereas high profile human rights prisoners are still behind bars without charge and trial."*

## iv. Move beyond the 'add and stir' approach to LGBTI rights

The Feminist International Assistance Policy inadequately includes and addresses LGBTI rights and this must not be replicated with the feminist foreign policy. It is critical that LGBTI rights be meaningfully integrated into the feminist foreign policy. Action is needed to ensure a coordinated, government-wide strategy to integrate LGBTI rights across all areas of foreign policy. Specific recommendations included: creating a mechanism or community of practice where government and civil society can talk to each other and collaborate on these issues; promoting top-down leadership within government on LGBTI issues; developing distinct definitions for feminism and gender; and adopting a willingness to 'ruffle feathers' in Canada's diplomatic relations to advance these rights.

## v. Stop international assistance flows to corrupt regimes

Participants raised the importance of ensuring that development assistance and finance are not provided to corrupt, abusive, or repressive governments. The example of the Philippines was given as a country with well-documented human rights violations, including against women human rights defenders and peacebuilders

## 'Fit for purpose' government departments

New policy approaches and objectives will require investments in government capacity, tools and procedures. Many participants were skeptical that GAC currently has the capacity to implement a feminist foreign policy. One participant described GAC as "a largely not feminist - intrusive, bureaucratic bilateral donor." There were many calls to ensure that GAC and other government departments are able to fully implement a feminist foreign policy.

### **i. Develop a recruitment strategy that sees racialized women meaningfully incorporated into the development and implementation of a feminist foreign policy at GAC**

This includes elevating not only the presence but the role racialized women have across Canadian missions abroad.

*"...appointing more white women to positions of power, that hold even more power over women of colour in other countries and trans folks, non-binary people of colour isn't progress for me regarding any sort of new and unique appointments that we make or even new roles for ambassadors. I think that that once again, lends support to the fact that we don't have an understanding, government-wide, department-wide of what intersectionality really is. And the 'plus' [in GBA+] isn't enough, because it's inherently excluded."*

*"The department needs to improve how it's recruiting and not only recruiting people, retaining people, and specifically people who have not only the subject matter expertise, but the lived experience."*

### **ii. Invest in capacity building**

New skills and tools will be required to successfully implement a feminist foreign policy. Training and other capacity building measures will need to be in-depth and ongoing. Of particular importance is training for all staff in all government departments engaged in international relations on operationalizing intersectional gender equality approaches, particularly in relation to working with diverse groups of feminists and LGBTI communities globally. Webinar participants emphasized (in numerous sessions) the need to have staff engage with racially diverse women, feminists, and gender diverse people to inform their work as issue-area experts. Gender equality expertise is required across all foreign policy issues and it is especially important in the areas of foreign policy where feminist approaches are still in the early stages of development.

*"I do think that there needs to be very specific technical training for Global Affairs staff in order to do this really well and it needs to be training that isn't just going to focus on folks in development. We need to be training who our diplomats are and who our ambassadors are, especially if they're going to do this stuff really well. But if we're going to do this intersectionally, these folks need to be trained really, really, really, really well."*

### **iii. Provide dedicated resources to implement the policy**

Participants reiterated the need for government departments to allocate specific funds towards implementation of the foreign feminist policy. Additional staffing, training, and resources are required to ensure that the policy is sufficiently adopted into departmental activities.

*"There has to be additional staffing, additional resources for training etc. You know, at all levels, Canadian diplomats, security experts, trade negotiators at every consulate and embassy should be trained. And that requires resources for this new foreign policy framework. Without that level of investment, it's window dressing again."*

### **iv. Support the efforts of Canadian missions abroad to connect with local feminist actors/organizations**

Linking to women's rights and gender justice advocates outside of Canada is key to informing Canada's analysis and understanding of various contexts. This is a political process that requires tact, diplomacy and sensitivity. Staff in Canadian missions require support and time to ensure that their contacts cover the range and diversity of local, national and regional actors.

## **Environment**

Although there was not a specific roundtable on environmental issues and climate change and there were not a significant number of detailed interventions, the two issues were raised as a critical component of a coherent foreign feminist policy (as noted in the updated principles). Participants noted the urgency of global action on the climate crisis and how this was part of a feminist approach. They highlighted the importance of addressing issues related to climate change in trade agreements, corporate accountability, and in economic policy.

Canada is one of the world's largest per capita polluters. Canada is failing to adequately address its domestic responsibility for the climate crisis and it is failing to pull its weight on the international scene. For example, its contribution to the recent First Replenishment of the Green Climate Fund lags behind those of other developed countries. Canada has an opportunity to ensure a feminist approach to climate finance that recognizes the role of women's rights organizations as key contributors to solutions to the climate crisis and ensures gender is mainstreamed throughout all climate finance.

Participants made the following two recommendations, which are worthy of being noted even if the discussions did not produce more in-depth analysis:

### **i. Increase immediate investments in addressing climate change**

Investments addressing climate change should reflect the urgency of the situation. Funding and actions should not be delayed or commitments for the future, but urgent financing to fund programs and initiatives that can start immediately.

### **ii. Recognize climate change's disproportionate impacts on women and support the feminist and women's rights organizations leading this work**

Financing should reflect the gendered impacts of climate change and listen to and support those most affected by these changes. Women's rights and feminist organizations are at the forefront of this, with rights-holders leading intersectional approaches to addressing climate change and economic justice. The Government of Canada should continue to consult with feminist organizations on Canadian climate financing and reform existing financing mechanisms so that these groups can receive direct support. One participant suggested that innovative financing would be more effective if it focused on improving funding mechanisms to better support feminist and women's rights organizations, as opposed to the funding of innovation through traditional business approaches.

*"Talking about economic justice without at the same time talking about social justice and environmental justice is a mistake, highly problematic, especially at a time of not just the climate but also the biodiversity crisis. We have to make climate justice and biodiversity essential to any conversations about economic justice. And this is an essential piece of a feminist approach because globally, women are often the most vulnerable in any kinds of climate and biodiversity justice issues."*

## **Monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and public reporting**

Public accountability for policy implementation was a key theme in the roundtables and webinars. Participants stressed the importance of ensuring that real progress is made across all foreign policy areas and avoiding the pitfall that the policy stays at the level of 'good intentions.'

### **i. Support civil society-based monitoring mechanisms**

While the government is obligated to conduct its own monitoring and evaluation of the policy's impact, it should also fund regular, independent, civil society-based monitoring of the policy. Such a measure would engage feminist leaders and movements in Canada and around the world in playing an active and continuous role in evaluating the policy's efficacy and shaping its implementation. One participant suggested monitoring should also include opportunities for partners and collaborators

with Canada to also have a say in the government's approach to feminist policy as a way to monitor its progress and effectiveness globally. This type of approach is consistent with the rights-based principle of 'nothing about us without us' approach to the policy process.

*"I would like to see that the feminist policy... has a mechanism like with the UPR or with the CSW or with the UN, that we have alternative report cards being given by civil society groups, who could then follow and see if Canada actually follows this feminist policy onwards"*

## **ii. Monitor and evaluate ongoing programs and initiatives against feminist principles**

Ongoing evaluation from a feminist perspective is required. This should be done at multiple levels. It is important to review whether or not major initiatives, policies, and programs conform to feminist principles. It is also important to use disaggregated data across all foreign policy initiatives.

## **iii. Ensure regular, public reporting on implementation, progress and lessons learned**

Evaluation reports at key points in the policy implementation are needed. Participants noted the importance of public accountability including through the development of indicators that would show progress on how goals are being worked towards.

## **iv. Develop a communications/public engagement strategy**

In order to build public support for and understanding of Canada's feminist foreign policy, public engagement is requirement. Funding should be made available to feminist organizations to design and implement discussions across Canada (that incorporate the participation of activists from around the world) on the value of a feminist approach and how foreign policy can be reconceptualized as such.

## 4. Conclusion

This document attempts to convey the richness of the discussions on Canada's feminist foreign policy. Participants from across Canada and various parts of the world welcomed the opportunity to engage on what Canada's feminist foreign policy could and should include. For many, it was the first time they had been asked to voice their perspective about how their government could represent them internationally and they appreciated the opportunity to articulate recommendations based on vast diverse lived experiences. These are not the voices of the traditional foreign policy elite.

Amongst the participants, there were varying degrees of optimism, cynicism, eagerness, pessimism, and positivity. Some requested a clear definition of how the government defines feminism and intersectionality. Others stated that there are multiple definitions, even among feminist activists, and question whether the search for the perfect definition would be take officials down an unproductive rabbit hole. Some requested emphasis on their particular area of work—trade policy or women human rights defenders or nuclear weapons or young women. Some voiced concern about the possibility of the policy being mere 'pink' or 'purple washing', with good talk and little action.

But there are a number of very clear points of consensus that emerged. Among these is an agreement that the policy should be transformational, ambitious, and aspirational, recognizing that not everything can be accomplished in the short term. Participants agreed that transformational change could be articulated and planned for over time. There is an agreement that the policy should cover all elements of Canadian foreign policy and that 'coherence' with domestic policy is essential to bring legitimacy to Canada's leadership and influence internationally. And there is agreement that public accountability and transparency are crucial.

There is also a strong consensus and hope that this consultation marks the beginning of ongoing discussions and engagement. There is a sense that holding public consultations to inform the development of the policy is an important first step that has benchmarked a new approach to foreign policy development and implementation. The participants hope this signals further commitment to uphold the principle of 'nothing about us, without us'. There is a keen interest in continuing and expanding the discussions of what a feminist approach to Canadian foreign policy includes and how this approach could be implemented in the real world.



# Annex I - List of roundtables and webinars

Below is information on the webinars and roundtables organized by the Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group for these consultations. Members of the Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group attended all sessions.

## **Economic Justice and Sustainability Roundtable (by invitation) November 9th**

18 participants including four academics, one Indigenous human rights activist and representatives from:

- Above Ground
- ActionAid International
- Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
- Canadian Labour Congress
- Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability
- Canadian Union of Public Employees
- CARE Canada
- Climate Action Network
- Global Alliance for Tax Justice
- Inter Pares
- Oxfam Canada
- Women's Environment and Development Organization (United States)

## **Human Rights Roundtable (by invitation), November 10th**

14 participants including one independent activist, two academics, and representatives from:

- CanWaCH
- Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform
- Colombia Diversa
- Cooperation Canada
- DAWN-Canada
- Dignity Network Canada
- EGALE Canada
- Human Rights Watch
- National Association of Women and the Law
- Nijera Kori
- Rainbow Railroad

## **Peace and Security Roundtable (by invitation), November 12th**

16 participants, including three academics and representatives from the following organizations:

- Canadian Coalition for Youth, Peace and Security
- Canadian Voice of Women for Peace
- Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy (Germany)
- Centre for Foreign Policy
- Code Blue
- Mines Action Canada
- Peace Track Initiative
- Project Ploughshares
- The White Helmets
- The Women Veterans Research and Engagement Network (WREN)
- Women Peace and Security Network Canada
- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

## **Roundtable with International Activists and Experts (by invitation) November 18th**

13 participants including one academic (based in the UK) and representatives from:

- APCOM (Thailand)
- ASEAN SOGIE Caucus (Vietnam)
- Corporación de Investigación y Acción Social y Económica (Colombia)
- Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action (India)
- Global Governance for Development Programme (Switzerland)
- Global Network of Peacebuilders (Global coalition)
- Heinrich Boell Foundation (USA)
- IM-Defensoras (Central America)
- IWRAW Asia-Pacific (Asia)
- International Center for Research on Women (USA)
- Kvinna till Kvinna (Sweden)
- PODER (Mexico)

## Young Women Webinar (by invitation) December 2nd

10 participants including three independent activists and representatives from:

- Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights
- YWCA
- The Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity
- Leading In Colour
- The Women's Network & Technology
- Asia-Pacific Foundation of Canada
- Native Women's Association of Canada

## Public Webinars

November 18th (noon EST). Simultaneous interpretation (French/English) provided. There were 106 people registered.

November 18th (7pm EST). Moderated in French, with simultaneous French/English interpretation provided. There were 57 people registered.

Invitations were circulated on social media and various listservs.

Participants included individuals, government officials, and representatives from the following organizations:

- Above Ground
- ACIC
- Action Against Hunger
- Alinea International
- Amnesty Canada
- Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
- Canadian Coalition for Youth, Peace & Security
- Canadian Federation of University Women
- Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action
- Canadian Red Cross
- Canadian Voice of Women for Peace
- CanWaCH
- CARE Canada
- CODE
- Crossroads International
- Cuso International
- Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security
- Digital Opportunity Trust

- Equal Voice
- Equality Fund
- Equitas
- Federation of American Scientists
- Horizon Ottawa
- Horizons of Friendship
- Humanitarian Policy Group
- Humanity & Inclusion
- IDRC Ottawa
- IMPACT
- Inter Pares
- International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)
- International Women's Development Agency (Australia)
- KAIROS
- LogicalOutcomes
- Mennonite Central Committee
- Mercy Corps
- Mines Action Canada
- NAFC
- Native Women's Association of Canada
- Northern Council for Global Cooperation
- Ontario Council for International Cooperation
- Operation Ezra
- Oxfam-Québec
- Plan International Canada
- Rainbow Railroad
- Rotary Action Group for Peace
- Save the Children Canada
- Steelworkers Humanity Fund
- Stephen Lewis Foundation
- Sudan Women Rights Action
- TELUS Health
- Women Transforming Cities International Society
- World Vision Canada
- WUSC

## Annex 2 - Recommendations from the public webinars

One hundred and six people, from a variety of sectors and with diverse interests including academics, civil society organization representatives, development practitioners, students and activists, registered for the two public webinars. The bulk of the conversation focused on concrete recommendations, although principles were also discussed. Many of these recommendations are mirrored in the specific thematic sections of this report but are organized below to provide a summary of public perspectives on feminist foreign policy.

### Implementation & Accountability

- Articulate concrete actions and their demonstrated value in all communications related to Canada's feminist foreign policy.
- Ensure alignment between feminist foreign policy and domestic policies.
- Ensure that the feminist focus of Canada's foreign policy lasts beyond the current government's mandate.
- Provide adequate resourcing, engage with opposition parties, and create legislative tools to ensure this remains an 'evergreen' policy that is institutionalized in Canadian foreign policy.
- Prioritize collection of disaggregated data in the monitoring and evaluation of feminist foreign policy, to gauge the impact.
- Develop measures and indicators that are feminist (consultative, mixed data sources); that do not just focus on 'successes' or end results, but the strength of the process and how commitments are implemented.
- Adopt transparent targets (both internal and external facing) and participatory accountability mechanisms. One idea is to adopt some sort of public barometer to show progress in real time (e.g. Barometer initiative to monitor Colombian peace accord,<sup>14</sup> reports to decision-makers and public).
- Ensure all government departments, bureaucrats, and diplomats have a strong intersectional understanding of Canada's feminist foreign policy.
- Provide capacity-building and training of civil servants to implement the feminist foreign policy.
- Develop a stronger understanding of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sexual characteristics (SOGIESC) and ensure its integration across all areas of foreign policy.
- Ensure funding for implementation of a feminist foreign policy, with clear investments and budget allocations.

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14 <https://peaceaccords.nd.edu/barometer>

- Shift away from the rules-based international order approach and towards prioritizing respect for international human rights law.
- Examine existing best practices instead of trying to 'reinvent the wheel'.
- Develop a feminist evaluation framework to assess progress.
- Leverage diplomatic efforts to encourage other countries to take a more innovative, transformational approach to foreign policy.

## Indigenous Rights

- Reach out to Indigenous women as part of a process input on Canadian feminist foreign policy, as well as engage Indigenous communities, recognize Indigenous knowledge (across all issues), and harm done with a view to prevent future harm.
- Implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.
- Ensure representation of Indigenous women in political leadership roles across these issues (e.g. New Zealand recently appointed an Indigenous foreign minister)

## Consultation

- Develop a clear strategy with women's rights organizations. This should include core funding for these organizations, a timeline, and regular accountability checkpoints.
- Uphold consultation, meaningful participation, and collaboration in the development, approval, and endorsement of the feminist foreign policy with appropriate stakeholders who are affected; as well as more broadly, including political parties.
- Enable participation of Global South voices in design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and periodic consultations.
- Consult and listen to diaspora groups in Canada, and specifically seek out women's experiences to help inform its feminist foreign policy.
- Make funds available to support civil society engagement.
- Facilitate continuous civil society engagement, extending to the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the policy.

## Economic and Climate Justice

- Embrace supply chain transparency using a gender lens. This is an important step to economic justice and improved living conditions for women along value chains.
- Ensure coherency with Canada's tax policy and defense policy Recognize unpaid care work.
- Demonstrate leadership by developing tools, a toolkit and roadmaps for feminist and/or gender-responsive trade agreements, domestic policy, and international negotiations.

- Assume a leadership role in convening countries and companies to discuss these issues and concerns.
- Apply a gender lens consistently throughout trade agreements (not delegated to a specific chapter of an agreement). Agreements should include enforceable provisions and include protections for social services, labour rights, and the environment. They should also include mechanisms to support access to land ownership.
- Canada should consider steps it can take to shift away from capitalistic growth premised on exploitation, including placing checks and balances on corporate interests.
- Take action against Canadian mining companies that exploit workers and the environment, with a particular impact on women, including enacting and supporting due diligence laws to hold companies accountable as they operate around the world.
- Strengthen the role and enforceability of the Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise by giving them resources and investigative powers.
- Ensure the implementation of the “Voices at Risk” guidelines to support human rights defenders

## Human Rights

- Fund and support civil society groups as well as grassroots communities to give concrete feedback on Canada's foreign policy, for example, in the form of shadow reports in the UN system.
- Facilitate visa processes and address barriers to entry for those traveling to Canada to share their expertise and experience. The government should encourage exchange and knowledge sharing.
- Integrate SOGIESC fully into a Canadian feminist foreign policy, including within the FIAP and SRHR-related programming. Its inclusion is currently weak.
- Leverage diplomacy to advance human rights—this includes standing up against violent extremism. Canada needs to be ready to take risks, even when it is hard.
- Support justice systems and access to justice globally. Canada should speak out against impunity and abuses.

## Peace and Security

- Reduce military spending and refocus Canada's efforts on healthcare and education.
- Stop facilitating and subsidizing arms exports.
- Sign the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.
- Appoint an Ambassador on disarmament.
- Support an increase in the number of women in peacebuilding discussions throughout the entirety of peace discussions.

- Consult and listen to women peacebuilders. They should also provide support and protection for rights defenders.
- Create a cross-departmental committee to work on the nexus of humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding sectors to promote agility and to share good practices.
- Ensure better resourcing of the Ambassador on Women, Peace and Security
- Reconsider its defense policy from 2017, which is aggressive, masculinized, and militarized.
- Reexamine what it means to be a peacekeeping nation and shift away from militarism, instead investing in peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

## Immigration

- Ensure coherency between Canada's immigration policy and Canada's feminist foreign policy, considering and mitigating, for example, the Canada-United States Safe Third Country Agreement and its gendered impacts.
- Ensure the inclusion of migrant workers in Canada and temporary foreign worker programs in the feminist foreign policy.
- Ensure that single women are not penalized in the immigration process, particularly with respect to scoring.
- Improve data collection, and its availability, on migrants and refugees, including those in detention centres. Independent monitoring is needed.

## International Assistance

- Ensure that Global Affairs Canada as a donor moves away from being an intrusive, bureaucratic bilateral donor.
- Render funding that is more flexible, predictable, and with minimal administrative burden.
- Support and ensure funding for women's empowerment and sustainable change, advocacy, and movement building
- Increase funding to international women's rights organizations.
- Work with and through local organizations in order to prioritize local civil society organizations' areas of concern and work in a contextually grounded way.
- Prioritize governance in aid funding.
- Ensure a Nexus approach is further operationalized amongst development, humanitarian, and peace and stabilization operations programs