

## A Brief Evaluation



# Internacional Feminista

# Mexico's Feminist Foreign Policy | A Brief Evaluation

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**Note:** Internacional Feminista did not receive payment or funding for the creation of this report. Due to the lack of transparency and accountability regarding Mexico's Feminist Foreign Policy, Internacional Feminista decided not to publish this report behind a paywall. Yet, as a feminist organization, we believe it is important to recognize civil society's work and the lack of funding and resources available to it, particularly feminist organizations. It is fundamental that feminist work be valued and paid.

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## Acronyms

- DGAS:** Dirección General para América del Sur (*General Directorate for South America*)
- DGDHD:** Dirección General para Derechos Humanos y Democracia (*General Directorate for Human Rights and Democracy*)
- DGVSC:** Dirección General de Vinculación con las Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil (*General Directorate for Civil Society Partnerships*)
- FFP:** Feminist Foreign Policy
- GBV:** Gender Based Violence
- IF:** Internacional Feminista
- IME:** Instituto de Mexicanxs en el Exterior (*Institute for Mexicans Abroad*)
- IMR:** Instituto Matías Romero (*Matías Romero Institute*)
- LGBTQ+:** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer and other gender and sexual diversities
- SEM:** Servicio Exterior Mexicano (*Mexican Foreign Service*)
- SRE:** Secretaría Relaciones Exteriores (*Foreign Affairs Secretariat*)
- SSRE:** Subsecretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (*Deputy Secretariat for Foreign Affairs*)

## Executive Summary

According to Mexico's Foreign Affairs Secretariat (SRE for its initials in Spanish), Mexico's Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) has five pillars that seek to "promote governmental action to reduce and eliminate structural differences, gaps and gender inequalities with the purpose of building a more just and prosperous society."<sup>1</sup> In order to support the implementation of this policy, indicators, concrete actions, reporting on results, and a policy roadmap are needed. To date, however, there has been little transparency and few accountability mechanisms exist to assess progress. Instead of a coherent public policy, the FFP is a patchwork of documents, presentations, and blogs.

This report seeks to make sense of existing information and elucidate the FFP's impact. IF believes that research and evaluation of the FFP is crucial to ensuring transparency and accountability to Mexicans and feminists everywhere. Additionally, it is key to underscore the risks of having patriarchal governmental structures co-opting and using the term "feminist" to pinkwash their image internationally while carrying out unfeminist and harmful policies at the federal and local levels.

To support this report, we filed multiple freedom of information requests to SRE, analyzed data, carried out semi-structured interviews, monitored SRE's social media and official communication channels, reviewed existing literature and drafted two case studies.

The report concludes with 10 recommendations to SRE to reframe the FFP and formalize its implementation. The recommendations are designed to support SRE's goals of "reducing and eliminating structural differences, gaps and gender inequalities with the purpose of building a more just and prosperous society," while mitigating potential risks of using the FFP as a rhetorical strategy without guarantees, especially in advance of Mexico's 2024 federal elections.

### Recommendations

1. SRE should develop a FFP policy roadmap that details actions, indicators, outcomes, and intended impact in a transparent and accessible format that allows academics and civil society to monitor and evaluate results.
2. The Federal Government should design a budgetary framework and assign adequate resources for the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the FFP.
3. SRE should collect personnel demographic data, disaggregated by gender, rank, ethnicity, etc. This data should be publicly available via SRE's online portal, in an open format.

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<sup>1</sup> "México anuncia la adopción de su Política Exterior Feminista", Federal Government of Mexico, January 9, 2020, available at: <https://www.gob.mx/sre/prensa/mexico-anuncia-la-adopcion-de-su-politica-exterior-feminista?state=public>

4. SRE should fulfill its commitment to mainstream gender perspectives across all of its foreign policy areas, including international security, migration, diplomacy, defense, cooperation, and trade.
5. SRE should guarantee that the FFP is an institutional policy. It should be clearly articulated and coordinated across the Secretariat. Gender perspectives should be mainstreamed across SRE's units in a cohesive way. All SRE units should cooperate and coordinate to ensure there is a consistent gender lens to their work. Moreover, gender perspectives should continue to be applied within SRE's administrative areas, including Human Resources, resource management, and budget allocation.
6. SRE should designate gender specialists and permanent personnel who are responsible for promoting and implementing the FFP, as well as ensuring consistency across all units and policy areas.
7. SRE should standardize and guarantee the adequate implementation of its Protocol for Consular Attention to Persons who are Victims of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and its corresponding Toolbox across all of its embassies and consulates.<sup>2</sup>
8. Additionally, SRE should train its diplomatic and consular staff regarding the aforementioned Protocol and Toolbox. Embassies and consulates should also be knowledgeable about the normative frameworks regarding GBV in the contexts and countries they operate in to adequately support Mexican survivors of GBV abroad.
9. SRE should form an independent permanent feminist board to review and approve the FFP's policy roadmap.
10. SRE should report its FFP-related activities and outcomes annually.

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<sup>2</sup> Protocol for Consular Attention to Unaccompanied Migrant Children and Adolescents, Consular Attention Protocol for Mexican Victims of Human Trafficking Abroad, Foreign Search and Investigation Support Mechanism (MAE), People Search Table Disappeared Migrants, among others.

## Introduction

### Who Are We?

Internacional Feminista (IF) was created in response to the need for a more inclusive dialogue and to reclaim feminism in international relations, international security, diplomacy, and foreign policy from a civil society lens. We are feminist students, scholars, and activists from the Global South. Our objective is to spark critical and feminist dialogues and debates about Mexico's, Latin America's, and the role of feminism in the international sphere.

### Why Did We Write this Report?

When Mexico announced its *Política Exterior Feminista* or Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) in 2019, the lack of participation from Mexican feminist civil society was conspicuous. Since then, the Foreign Affairs Secretariat or *Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores* (SRE in Spanish), in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has organized regional consultations with women across Mexico.<sup>3</sup> However, there is still little public information available on what Mexico's FFP consists of and what it has achieved. Furthermore, there are no accountability or transparency mechanisms that allow independent researchers or civil society to gauge the scope and impact of Mexico's FFP.

According to SRE, Mexico's FFP consists of five pillars:

1. A gender mainstreaming approach to Mexico's foreign policy and a feminist plus foreign agenda
2. Gender parity within SRE
3. A SRE free of violence
4. Equality is visible
5. SRE is feminist and intersectional

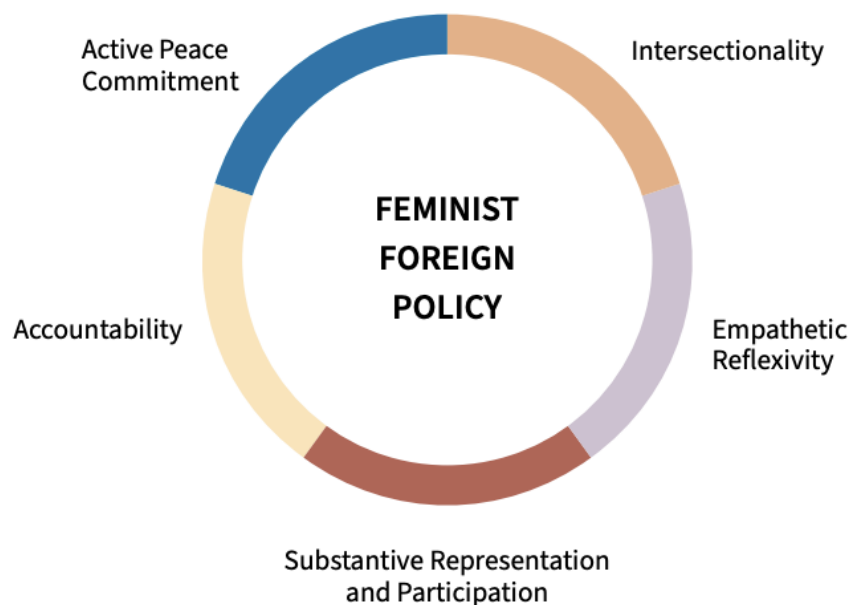
On their webpage, SRE lists and briefly describes these pillars. However, it fails to explain how they will achieve each of them or how they will measure success. Moreover, there is no official formal document, policy roadmap, or white paper describing action items, indicators or specific policy goals.

There is no single definition of FFP, several definitions exist. According to the German chapter of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), an FFP, regardless of the context of the implementing country, should include five core feminist values: intersectionality, empathetic reflexivity, accountability, substantive representation and participation, and active

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<sup>3</sup> "SRE and UNDP conclude consultations. What do women say? in Querétaro, Querétaro", United Nations Development Program Mexico, May 23, 2022, available at <https://www.mx.undp.org/content/mexico/es/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2022/concluyen-sre-y-el-undp-consultations-what-say-women--in-what.html>

peace commitment.<sup>4</sup> Mexico's FFP does not comply with these values. Worryingly, it does not include substantive representation or participation from Mexican feminist civil society organizations. Neither does it envision an active peace commitment. In 2022, Mexico's Congress, with the President's support, voted to militarize public safety, largely substituting the police for the National Guard, a militarized security body. As mentioned, Mexico's FFP also lacks transparency and accountability mechanisms that allow civil society to track, monitor, and evaluate it.



*Figure 1: Core Feminist Foreign Policy Values. Image taken from "Practicing Feminist Foreign Policy in the Everyday: A Toolkit" by WILPF Germany (2021)*

With this report, IF seeks to contribute with transparency and feminist accountability regarding Mexico's FFP. Through freedom of information requests to SRE, interviews, descriptive data analysis, and a brief review of the literature on FFPs, we attempt to elucidate the FFP's impact and progress based on the five pillars formulated by SRE. Finally, we seek to contribute to the debate on the opportunities and limitations of an FFP. Throughout the report, we ask ourselves and our readers, what is an FFP? What is its purpose? What does a successful FFP look like?

<sup>4</sup> Cheung, J. et. al., "Practicing Feminist Foreign Policy in the Everyday: A Toolkit," November 2021, available at <https://www.wilpf.de/practicing-feminist-foreign-policy-in-the-everyday-a-toolkit-2/>



While an FFP is not the panacea for solving gender inequality or the legacy of different systems of oppression, it has the potential to be a critical tool that helps us rethink traditional foreign policy and international security. It allows us to formulate more inclusive and equitable policies. We believe an FFP offers important alternatives and different ways of thinking about pressing global issues, such as climate change, misinformation, socioeconomic inequality, and armed conflict. From a feminist lens, an FFP can reframe international relations beyond states and engage communities and local entities to rethink and participate in the solutions to these issues.

### Beyond the *Feminist* Adjective

Feminist Foreign Policies have not been immune to skepticism and criticism. First, because they have mainly emerged from the Global North they have the potential to reinforce colonialist practices and euro-centric perspectives. Second, although they have been labeled as progressive, FFPs do not always address core structural issues, such as the political economy of armed conflicts, and the reconfiguration of the financial system and international cooperation, among others that differentially and disproportionately affect women and sexual and gender diverse populations in the Global South. Third, because FFPs are vulnerable to being instrumentalized,<sup>5</sup> some of the actions framed by the FFPs, although well-intentioned, tend to be reduced to lip service and are far from promoting a social transformation that guarantees rights and access to women's and non-binary persons' wellbeing.<sup>6</sup>

At IF, we question the use of the adjective *feminist* to describe *foreign policy* to help reimagine foreign policies and contribute to achieve global justice and no-oppression.<sup>7</sup> According to classical feminist theory in International Relations, the international system is an intrinsically patriarchal space that reproduces injustices, inequalities and hierarchies that favor Western countries and white bodies. In this sense, feminist actors that participate in the international system should seek to modify the global order and challenge the centrality of nation-states from a counter-hegemonic and emancipatory vision.<sup>8</sup> Hence, we believe that Mexico's FFP should go beyond being an adjective. Quoting internationalist Isabella Esquivel: "The only course that any policy that tries to respond and be consistent with feminisms could have, is one that listens and

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<sup>5</sup> Bjarnergard, Elin and Zetterberg, Par, "How Autocrats Use Women's Rights to Boost Themselves," Foreign Policy, June 3, 2022, available at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/06/03/autocrats-gender-equality-women-rights-rwanda/>

<sup>6</sup> Drulard Marquez, Waquel Javier, "*Capitalismo Mutante: Pinkwashing y Purplewashing*", Blog in El Salto en Papel, September 10, 2020

<sup>7</sup> "Feminist perspectives on international relations, cooperation and politics", Blog de Carolina Foundation, April 7, 2021, available at <https://www.fundacioncarolina.es/miradas-feministas-a-las-relaciones-internacionales-la-cooperacion-and-foreign-policy/>

<sup>8</sup> Fuentes V., Cristián, "Feminism in international relations and the deep state in Chile", Blogs and Opinion in El Mostrador, February 25, 2022, available at <https://www.elmostrador.cl/noticias/opinion/2022/02/25/el-feminismo-en-relaciones-internacionales-y-e-l-deep-state-chilean/>

accompanies women (when it comes to their diversity), a course that's respectful of our knowledge."<sup>9</sup>

Feminists tend to provoke discomfort because they seek to modify and transform power relations. In foreign policy, feminists seek to deconstruct and dismantle patriarchal, elitist, and masculinized structures. Feminists promote unconventional, inclusive, and non-oppressive ways of interacting in the international system. To quote feminist Angela Davis, "You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time." Feminists have their own epistemologies, demands, and practices. Therefore, when adopting an FFP, policymakers should be mindful and knowledgeable of feminist theories, their goals and implications. Pro-feminist governments are welcome, but they require coherence, analysis, effort, and substantive participation of feminists.<sup>10</sup>

In Mexico, feminist collective action is diverse, with decades of existence and consolidation. The *Movimiento Amplio de Mujeres* or Women's Movement has worked day to day to develop proposals and demand conditions and resources to advance substantive equality.<sup>11</sup> Thanks to the actions of women in recent years, there have been significant advances in gender equality.

Mexico has ratified all international treaties on women's rights and has national norms that protect women, such as the General Law for Equality between Women and Men (2006), the General Law for Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence (2007), the Federal Law to Prevent and Eradicate Discrimination (2003), the Mexican Official Standards and Mexican Standards (2012, 2015, 2018), Parity Reforms in All (2019), to name a few. Likewise, there are public policies to protect women's right and promote gender-equity, such as the National Development Plan, the National Program for Equality between Women and Men, Comprehensive Program to Prevent, Address, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women, a gender-sensitive federal budget annex (annex 13), among others.

Thus prior to the announcement of the Mexican FFP, national and international frameworks were already in place to uphold and protect human rights, gender equality and parity, non-discrimination, and a life free of violence. These are products of years of women's and feminist mobilizations. Additionally, Mexico has a long history of promoting women's rights in international forums. For example, the First World Conference on Women in 1975 was held in Mexico City. Mexico also played a leading role in the development of the Belém do Pará

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<sup>9</sup> "Construction of a Feminist Foreign Policy: Perspectives from the Mexican context", available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwbDAclUqLI&t=1158s>

<sup>10</sup> "Feminist Foreign and Development Policy? Adding substance to good intentions", Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, June 2, 2022, available at <https://www.fes.de/en/themenportal-gender-jugend/gender/the-future-is-feminist/artikelseite/feminist-foreign-and-development-policy-adding-substance-to-good-intentions>

<sup>11</sup> The term *Movimiento Amplio de Mujeres* was mentioned for the first time by María Luisa Tarrés to explain the presence on the social scene of various groups, organizations, movements women and feminists who seek to advance diverse equality agendas.

Convention in 1994. Recently, the country hosted the Generation Equality Forum, a global event that sought to accelerate action and implementation of international commitments.

In this context, the difference between adding “feminist” and promoting a foreign policy with gender perspectives as Mexico has done in recent decades is unclear. According to the Mexican government, a gender perspective is “a conceptual tool that makes it possible to identify, question and evaluate discrimination, inequality and exclusion of women, which is justified on the basis of biological differences between women and men, as well as the actions that must be taken to act on gender factors and create the conditions for change that allow progress in the construction of gender equality.”<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, the Mexican FFP is defined as “a set of principles that seek, through foreign policy, to guide government actions to reduce and eliminate structural differences, gaps and gender inequalities in order to build a more just and prosperous society.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, it seems that Mexico’s FFP must go beyond gender mainstreaming and fully embrace a more ambitious and radical agenda.

### Methodology and Report Summary

In the following sections, IF seeks to elucidate the scope and impact of Mexico’s FFP using SRE’s own parameters as the benchmarks. Given the lack of public information, IF filed several freedom of information requests to define, evaluate and monitor each of the five pillars proposed by SRE. IF also analyzed data based on SRE’s responses to track SRE’s FFP objectives. In addition, IF conducted interviews, drafted a literature review, and wrote two case studies.

Evaluating and measuring FFP results was particularly difficult since Mexico’s FFP’s objectives are abstract and ambiguous. For example, when SRE says that “Mexico’s FFP is founded on a set of pillars that seek to promote government actions to reduce and eliminate structural differences, gaps and gender inequalities, in order to build a more just and prosperous society,”<sup>14</sup> it is unclear what the “governmental actions” SRE refers to or how they seek to reduce differences and promote gender equality.

The following sections analyze the five pillars of the FFP in Mexico in the aforementioned order. First, IF studied and evaluated gender mainstreaming in Mexico’s participation in multilateral fora. Second, IF addressed gender parity and measure the representation of women in Mexico’s diplomatic-consular branches, Mexico’s Foreign Service or *Servicio Exterior Mexicano* (SEM in

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<sup>12</sup> “What is the gender perspective and why is it necessary to implement it?”, Government of Mexico, November 22, 2018, available at <https://www.gob.mx/conavim/articulos/que-es-la-perspectiva-de-genero-y-por-que-es-necesario-impler to her>

<sup>13</sup> “The Feminist Foreign Policy of the Government of Mexico”, Ministry of Foreign Relations, available at [https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/576095/Presentacio\\_n\\_PEF\\_baja.pdf](https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/576095/Presentacio_n_PEF_baja.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> “Mexico announces the adoption of its Feminist Foreign Policy”, Government of Mexico, January 9, 2020, available in <https://www.gob.mx/sre/prensa/mexico-anuncia-la-adopcion-de-su-politica-exterior-feminista?state=published>

Spanish), Mexico's Foreign Service Academy or *Instituto Matias Romero* (IMR in Spanish), and within SRE, according to information provided by the Secretariat itself. Third, IF measured gender-based violence (GBV) within SRE according to information provided by the Secretariat. As well, IF presents two case studies on GBV related to SRE. Fourth, IF analyzed the FFP's branding in SRE events, as well as in SRE's official communication channels and social media. Finally, IF explored intersectionality in Mexico's FFP taking up both SRE documentation and existing literature.

## Foreign Policy with a Gender Perspective and Feminist Foreign Agenda Plus

The Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) proposed gender mainstreaming as a key strategy for reducing inequalities between women and men. It was a call to governments and other actors to promote an active and visible approach of gender mainstreaming in all policies and programs. In other words, it was a call to place gender at the center of all programming, action, and evaluation, instead of treating it as a marginal issue. Gender mainstreaming underscores the principle that there can be no sustainable development if gender-based discrimination exists.

Mexico's FFP's first pillar is in line with feminists' call from Beijing to mainstream gender perspectives across policies and government actions. It specifically calls for the mainstreaming of a human rights approach, gender perspective, and intersectionality across Mexico's foreign policy. SRE further describes it as a "Foreign Policy with a Gender Perspective and Foreign Feminist Agenda Plus." According to SRE, this pillar also seeks to promote and prioritize concrete actions with a global impact. Finally, it seeks to foster alliances with countries that promote gender mainstreaming in international fora and emphasize the principle of "leave no one behind."

Moreover, SRE states this pillar "will consist of a guiding document and manual of principles for action to illustrate the elements that negotiators should take into account for the inclusion of gender perspectives and courses in the IMR." IF made a freedom of information request to identify these documents. SRE replied saying the documents did not exist.

### The Scope of Mexico's FFP

This first pillar is relevant to questions regarding the scope of Mexico's FFP. FFPs vary widely in their scope and purpose. For example, Canada's FFP mostly consists of its Feminist International Assistance Policy, which focuses on development cooperation and assistance.<sup>15</sup> The Mexican government takes a broad and ambitious approach, aiming to mainstream an

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<sup>15</sup> For more information:

[https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues\\_developpement-enjeux\\_developpement/priorities-priorites/policy-politique.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/priorities-priorites/policy-politique.aspx?lang=eng)

intersectional gender perspective across all of its foreign policy. In this sense, the Mexican FFP resembles the former Swedish FFP.<sup>16</sup>

As part of the research for this report, IF found that despite its broad and ambitious scope, the implementation of Mexico's FFP has been limited to the multilateral sphere of Mexican diplomatic work.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, most efforts have focused on the SRE Undersecretariat for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights. Although this could be considered the most appropriate office to lead these efforts, the fact is that fulfilling the objectives of the original approach of the Mexican FFP involves going beyond a single undersecretariat or even a single Secretariat. The implementation of the FFP should engage all SRE departments, as well as the Executive and Legislative powers, in particular the Senate which has jurisdiction over Mexico's foreign policy.

### Implementation So Far

The following multilateral fora are some of the multilateral spaces where Mexico emphatically voiced its FFP and goals: Generation Equality Forum, G20 and the 25th, 26th, and 27th Conference of the Parties (COP). The Generation Equality Forum was a meeting convened by UN Women and co-chaired jointly by the Governments of Mexico and France, both of which have a Feminist Foreign Policy. The Forum opened in Mexico City in March 2021 and concluded in Paris in June 2021. It is noteworthy that the Forum noted as one of its aspirations "to be transformative and disruptive" and sought to fulfill the commitments of the Beijing Platform for Action.<sup>18</sup> At the Generation Equality Forum, SRE linked Mexico's FFP with the demands and values of the feminist movement, albeit indirectly since there is no open space for Mexican civil society participation and monitoring of the FFP.

According to information provided by SRE through freedom of information requests, Mexico's most notable development at the G20 was its support for the EMPOWER alliance and the Women in Business Action Council. However, the information received does not allow us to

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<sup>16</sup> For more information: <https://www.government.se/government-policy/feminist-foreign-policy/>

<sup>17</sup> IF and several foreign policy experts expressed their disappointment on social media regarding Mexico's vote at the UN Economic and Social Council last December 15th, 2022. Mexico abstained in a voting session to expel Iran from the Commission on the Status of Women. In the last months, the Iranian government has resorted to ruthless repression mechanisms against civilian protests that defend women's rights, as well as the movement "Women, Life, Freedom." The Mexican government justified its vote by claiming it was consistent with its multilateral approach, which prioritizes keeping all parties present in multilateral fora as a way to uphold open dialogue for solving controversies and, at the same time, condemning the actions of the states in question if the situation demands it. In other words, multilateralism through inclusion, not exclusion. While this is a defensible stance, experts have pointed out that the cost of voting in favor of the expulsion was low as this Commission is not the only stance to maintain an open dialogue with Iran and to demand accountability. In that sense, the voting was symbolic and represented the international support for the feminist movement in Iran. Considering the Mexican stance on feminism at the international stage, we consider that this is a missed opportunity not only to show solidarity with the Iranian people and coherence with its FFP, but to innovate in the implementation of Mexican foreign policy. It was an unequivocal gesture of the limitations of the FFP in detonating substantive and radical change. See: <https://twitter.com/majourzua/status/1603179426069762048>

<sup>18</sup> For more information: <https://forogeneracionigualdad.mx/>



distinguish the concrete actions undertaken by the Mexican government in these initiatives. At COP25, Mexico was a protagonist in the renewal of the Gender Action Program.<sup>19</sup> The mainstreaming of the gender agenda was also promoted at COP 26. Mexico insisted on inclusive climate action that considers all negotiation topics in a cross-cutting manner, such as human rights, gender equality, and indigenous peoples' rights.<sup>20</sup> During COP27, SRE sponsored an event on the intersection between FFP, militarization, and the climate crisis, and presented its National Action Plan on Gender and Climate. However, the plan is not publicly available.<sup>21</sup>

### **Mexico's Role in the United Nations Security Council**

After more than a decade since its last tenure on the Security Council, Mexico was elected as a non-permanent member for the years 2021-2022. The Security Council is the most powerful body in the UN system, as well as the most militaristic, androcentric, and the least democratic. However, the unanimous approval of Resolution 1325 in 2000, which recognizes the differentiated impacts of armed conflicts on women, opened the way for the advancement of a gender equality agenda in this forum. Therefore, Mexico's participation within the context of a feminist agenda and implementing an FFP is noteworthy.

Mexico took over the rotating presidency of the Security Council in November 2021. President Andrés Manuel López Obrador led the first session and announced the key issues for Mexico.<sup>22</sup> The President underscored that security is not about military might but the "right to a life free of fear and misery" (a conceptualization close to human security that feminists prefer to traditional security concepts). However, he did not mention Mexico's FFP or gender equality in general. He also proposed the creation of an international fund to address poverty, but overlooked the fact that women are more vulnerable to poverty. It was also striking that he referred to human rights as a duty that nations "offer," not as inalienable rights that states have an obligation to protect.<sup>23</sup>

Actions to advance a gender equality agenda in the Security Council have depended solely on operational staff. High-ranking officials have not highlighted the issue in their speeches and events, giving the impression that gender equality issues are not a priority or something that Mexico is actively promoting. Thus, it is crucial to highlight the work being carried out by the

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<sup>19</sup> For more information:

<https://www.gob.mx/semarnat/prensa/mexico-participo-en-la-cop-25-de-manera-constructiva-y-con-el-objective-of-strengthening-cooperation-on-climate-matter>

<sup>20</sup> For more information:

<https://cambioclimatico.gob.mx/culmina-la-participacion-de-la-delegacion-mexicana-en-la-cop26/>

<sup>21</sup> "Mexico presents its National Action Plan on Gender and Climate," Federal Government of Mexico, November 14, 2022, available at:

<https://www.gob.mx/sre/prensa/mexico-presents-its-national-action-plan-on-gender-and-climate-change?idiom=en>

<sup>22</sup> "Speech at the United Nations Security Council", Andrés Manuel López Obrador, 9 November, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCiJlpCOSSs>

<sup>23</sup> "Mexico and the Security Council", Ilse Reyes, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, November 12, 2021, available at: <https://www.kas.de/es/web/mexiko/einzeltitel/-/content/mexico-y-el-consejo-de-seguridad>

team of the Permanent Mission of Mexico in New York and the SRE General Directorate for the UN. For example, Mexico co-chaired, with Ireland, the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security. Likewise, Mexico, Ireland, and Kenya promoted the inclusion of a gender analysis in all Security Council meetings and the presence of women civil society representatives in open debates.

Finally, Mexico published its first National Action Plan (NAP; PNA in Spanish) on Women, Peace and Security in January 2021, as a precursor to its participation in the Security Council. Mexico's NAP was presented as part of the FFP and is a joint effort between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense (which encompasses the Army and Air Force), the Ministry of the Navy, the Ministry of Security and Citizen Protection, and the National Institute for Women (INMUJERES in Spanish). IF has analyzed Mexico's first NAP, its successes and limitations in a separate document.<sup>24</sup> The NAP is currently the only formal instrument of the FFP that has clear indicators and objectives to measure its implementation. In July 2022, the Secretary of the Navy published its first evaluation of the NAP.<sup>25</sup> IF urges feminist civil society to conduct an independent evaluation of the WPS agenda in Mexico.

### Unanswered Questions

IF's research about Mexico's foreign policy's gender mainstreaming approach opens a series of questions about SRE's responsibilities and FFP implementation. First, it is unclear whether the FFP engages other branches of government, such as the executive and legislative powers. Moreover, in relation to foreign trade or defense, it is unclear whether the Ministries of Economy, National Defense, Navy and Interior are involved. If not, why? Or should they? In other words, how are gender perspectives incorporated into defense and security policy? What is the roadmap for incorporating the FFP in negotiations for free trade agreements? What is the specific role of each actor involved in Mexican foreign policy in the implementation of the FFP in addition to the diplomatic corps and SRE, for example the legislative branch? IF believes a comprehensive gender mainstreaming approach should actively engage other Secretariats and branches of government.

From our research, SRE appears to be the only stakeholder involved in mainstreaming gender perspectives across Mexico's foreign policy, which means implementation is severely restricted. SRE refers to the Senate as an ally and not as an active FFP stakeholder who shares responsibility for the successful implementation of the FFP. Moreover, SRE selects certain foreign policy issues over others. For example, it prioritizes gender equality in multilateral fora but not in trade agreements and negotiations or international cooperation initiatives or

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<sup>24</sup> "Mexico's First Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan: An Assessment", Daniela Philipson García and Ana Velasco Ugalde, Women In International Security, June 2021, available at: <https://wiisglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Philipson-and-Velasco-Mexico-Nap-June-2021.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> "Mexico's First Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan: An Assessment", Daniela Philipson García and Ana Velasco Ugalde, Women In International Security, June 2021, available at: <https://wiisglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Philipson-and-Velasco-Mexico-Nap-June-2021.pdf>

discussions. Lastly, IF believes it is crucial that intersectional gender perspectives be mainstreamed in Mexico's bilateral relation with the United States. The US-Mexico relationship defines key migration and security issues that disproportionately affect Mexican migrant women living in the US. Thus, the FFP should directly translate into upholding Mexican migrant women's and non-binary people's rights in the U.S.

To conclude, it is worth asking what is understood as foreign policy within the FFP. If the concept is understood broadly, as implied by the first pillar of Mexico's FFP, it should encompass all of Mexico's foreign policy actors and not just SRE. The conceptual and practical points of the FFP should be clear. In a democratic country, checks and balances are maintained by the inclusion of a broader number of actors. This is important because an FFP should be accountable to civil society and constituents, in general.

### Opportunities and Challenges

Championing gender equality in multilateral fora is relevant in the current international context. While there have been advances in women's equality in the last decades, the 21st century is seeing a return of authoritarian leaders who have launched simultaneous attacks on women's rights and democracy.<sup>26</sup> Turkey and Poland are on a crusade against the Istanbul Convention, one of the main regional instruments for preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. In our region, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the historic ruling guaranteeing the right to abortion, and Brazil was recently governed by an ultra-conservative and explicitly anti-feminist leader.

Against this backdrop, the fact that Mexico is openly taking up the feminist banner in multilateral forums leverages the achievements of feminist activists in the face of this authoritarian onslaught. The irony is that, within Mexico's borders feminists protest an authoritarian backlash personified by President Lopez Obrador. Thus, Mexico is unable to implement the feminist values it champions abroad at the domestic level.<sup>27</sup> This incoherence is Mexico's main weakness and subtracts legitimacy from the FFP.<sup>28</sup>

In conclusion, efforts to mainstream gender perspectives in Mexico's foreign policy are still far from comprehensive. The FFP's first pillar attains a range of areas and opens the door to a series of stakeholders that have either not been invited to participate or been actively involved. Moreover, gender mainstreaming has been limited to Mexico's participation in multilateral fora.

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<sup>26</sup> "Revenge of the Patriarchs: Why Autocrats Fear Women," Erica Chenoweth and Zoe Marks, March/April 2022, available at

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2022-02-08/women-rights-revenge-patriarchs>

<sup>27</sup> "Opinion | United Nations Mexico vs. Domestic Mexico", Cecilia Farfán-Méndez, April 16, 2021, available at: <https://mexicotoday.com/2021/04/16/opinion-united-nations-mexico-vs-domestic-mexico/>

<sup>28</sup> For more information:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc-FsF6j9LKmTJXIXcsLUuqxHS5ZtXAipBfgbLEuiyVKsUL1w/viewform>

Thus, IF considers the FFP is a step forward in the right direction but acknowledges it has significant limitations.

## Gender Parity Within SRE

The second Mexican FFP pillar is the promotion of gender parity, specifically within SRE. SRE commits to 50% of its staff being women and to implementing institutional, organizational, and regulatory improvements to eliminate structural disparities and reduce gender gaps within SRE. Likewise, it commits to improve SEM regulations to promote women.<sup>29</sup> According to the government's Program for Equality between Women and Men (2009-2012), SRE has been aware of the persistence of a gender gap among its higher-ranking positions for several years. In 2019, SRE announced an initiative to promote women in decision-making positions. It is worth noting that the announcement was made prior to the adoption of the FFP.<sup>30</sup>

To learn more about SRE's efforts to achieve gender parity, IF conducted an exhaustive investigation. IF found only one SRE presentation detailing the number of women and men in the diplomatic-consular branch by rank. The presentation also detailed gender-disaggregated SRE staff data by rank (summarized in Figures 1 and 2). However, the presentation did not specify the date of the data. IF estimates these data are from 2020-2021. IF also found one independent report, a Harvard Master of Public Policy thesis on gender equality in the SEM by Tania Del Rio. Del Rio's 2016 thesis is titled "Gender Equality in Mexico's Foreign Service."<sup>31</sup> Del Rio concludes that gender biases exist in the SEM's admission, promotion, and exit processes.<sup>32</sup> Del Rio's recommendations include studying the causes related to gender differences in SEM entrance exam results and recruiting more women, particularly in positions that lead to promotions.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> "The Feminist Foreign Policy of the Government of Mexico", SRE, available at: [https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/576095/Presentacion\\_PEF\\_baja.pdf](https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/576095/Presentacion_PEF_baja.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> "Mexico's feminist foreign policy: a first evaluation exercise", Ramírez Camacho, V. and Mejía Gutiérrez, X., Mexican Journal of Foreign Policy, number 120, May-August 2021, pp. 223-245, available at: <https://revistadigital.sre.gob.mx/index.php/rmpe/article/view/104/92>

<sup>31</sup> Del Rio, Tania, "Policy Analysis Exercise: Gender Equality in the Mexican Foreign Service", Harvard Kennedy School, 2016, available at:

[https://www.hks.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/degree%20programs/MPP/files/16%203%2029%20MP\\_P\\_PAE\\_Tania%20Del%20Rio\\_Gender%20Equality%20in%20the%20Mexican%20Foreign%20Service.pdf](https://www.hks.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/degree%20programs/MPP/files/16%203%2029%20MP_P_PAE_Tania%20Del%20Rio_Gender%20Equality%20in%20the%20Mexican%20Foreign%20Service.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

### Gender Parity by Rank in Mexico's Diplomatic-Consular Branch (2020-2021)

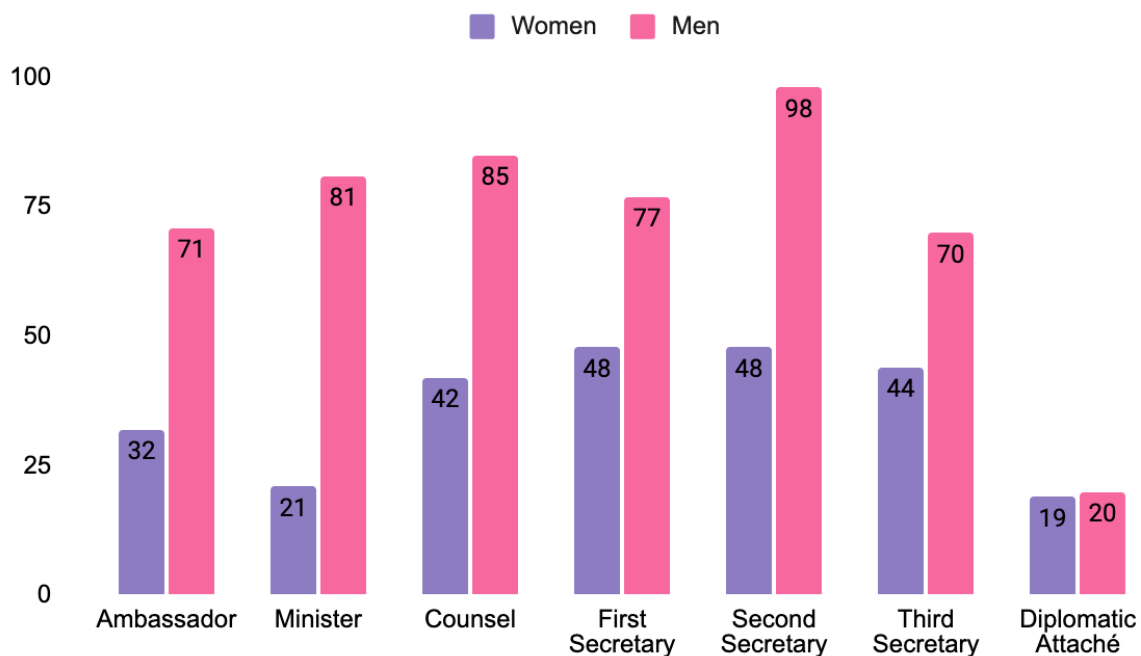
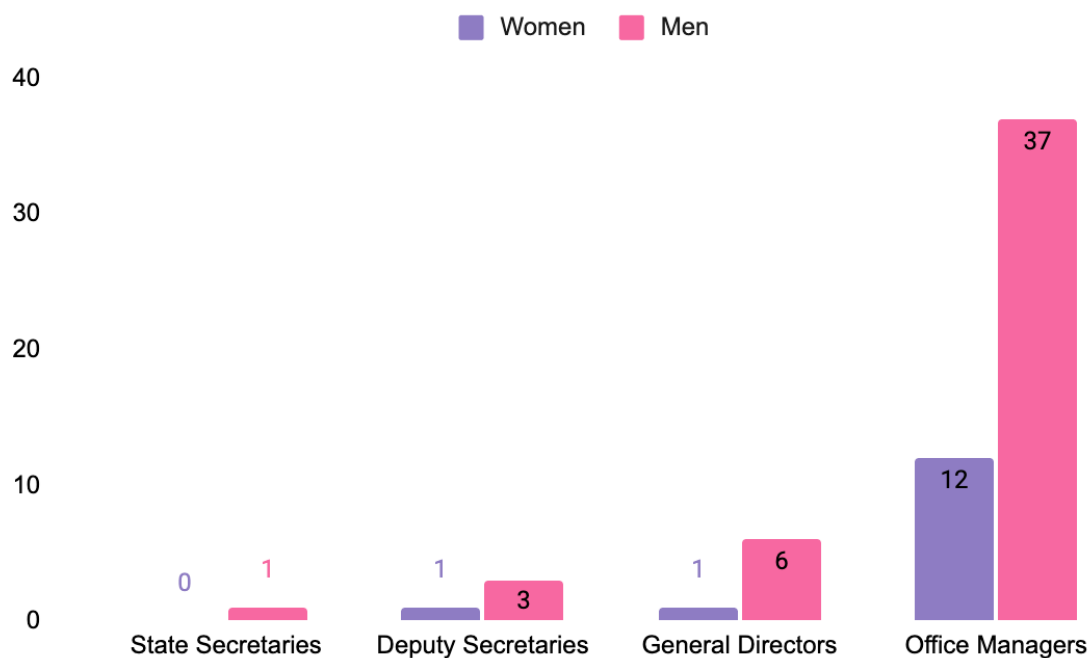


Figure 2: Gender Parity in Mexico's Diplomatic-Consular Branch, created by IF using data from SRE's presentation, titled "Feminist Foreign Policy in Mexico's Government"

### Gender Parity by Rank in SRE (2020-2021)





*Figure 3: Gender Parity by Rank in SRE, created by IF using data from SRE's presentation, titled "Feminist Foreign Policy in Mexico's Government"*

Due to the lack of public information and gender-disaggregated data on SRE's, SEM's and IMR's personnel, IF filed a freedom of information request to SRE.<sup>34</sup> IF requested the following indicators to measure gender parity in these institutions:

- The percentage of women by rank in SRE for the period 2018-2021.
- The percentage of women by rank in Mexican consulates and embassies for the period 2018-2021.
- The percentage of female students and professors at IMR for the period 2018-2021.

Regarding the percentage of SRE female employees by rank from 2018 to 2021, the Secretariat responded that "there is no obligation to prepare ad hoc documents to address requests for access to information." Thus, IF concluded that SRE does not have rank and gender-disaggregated personnel data. IF cannot know or evaluate the impact of the FFP to achieve gender parity within the SRE itself.

Regarding the percentage of women by rank in Mexican consulates and embassies abroad (in other words, in SEM), SRE did share data, summarized in Figure 3, excluding data from 2018. SEM's organizational chart was restructured in 2019, making the 2018 data incompatible with the rest. To review SEM's 2018 data, please refer to the Annex.

While there are fewer executive-level positions (i.e., Ambassador, Minister and Counselor) relative to administrative positions (i.e., administrative attaché), in Figure 3, IF observed that the percentage of women by rank has remained relatively constant since 2019. For the executive positions of Ambassador, Minister and Counselor, the percentage of women has remained approximately around 7 percent, 6 percent, and 10 percent, respectively. On the other hand, the aggregate percentage of women in administrative positions (administrative attachés A, B, C and D) has remained around 40 percent. Therefore, there seems to have been no major changes or impact on the Foreign's Service gender parity in recent years.

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<sup>34</sup>Freedom of information requests numbers 330026822000170 and 330026822000065.

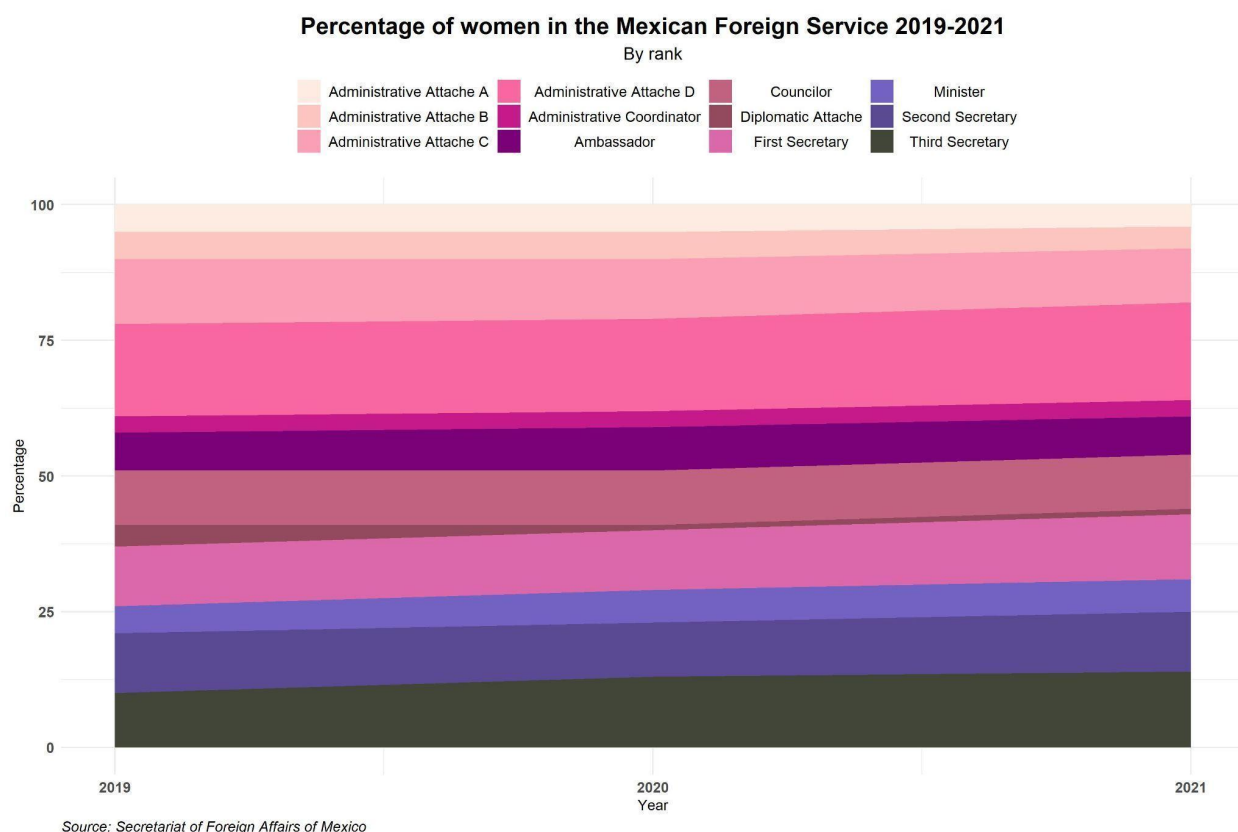


Figure 4: Percentage of women in the Mexican Foreign Service, created by IF using data from freedom of information requests numbers 330026822000065 and 330026822000170

IF also reviewed gender parity in diplomatic appointments. According to the Mexican Constitution, the President sends a list of diplomatic appointments to the Senate of the Republic for its review and approval. IF found that between 2018 and 2022, of 81 diplomatic appointments, only 32% were women—well below the 50% gender parity threshold.<sup>35</sup>

Secretary Marcelo Ebrard and Senator Martha Micher have also promoted a reform to SEM to materialize the principles of gender parity, equality, and access to a life free of violence in Mexico's Foreign Service. This initiative was approved by the Senate and is currently in the Chamber of Deputies waiting to be discussed and voted in the plenary. Although the reform is well-intentioned, female SEM staff have reproached Secretary Ebrard, claiming they were not consulted. In a letter, the diplomats underscored that the most urgent changes did not require going down the lengthy legislative route. Some of these include organizing a deliberative and participative process with SEM members and increasing SRE's budget allocation for gender equality.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Created by Internacional Feminista using information from the *Gaceta del Senado de la República*.

<sup>36</sup> Created by Internacional Feminista using information from the *Gaceta del Senado de la República*.

Finally, in response to our request regarding the percentage of female professors and students at the IMR, SRE said it only had data on the percentage of female students but not professors. In the following figure, there is gender parity in IMR students, with 54 percent of female students in the IMR in 2020 and 2021. This parity precedes the FFP as the percentage of female students in 2018 was 51 percent. It is concerning that, although there is gender parity among IMR students, the percentage of women in the senior ranks of SEM remains the same. This could signify higher attrition rates for women relative to men or bias for men in the promotion and selection process.<sup>37</sup>

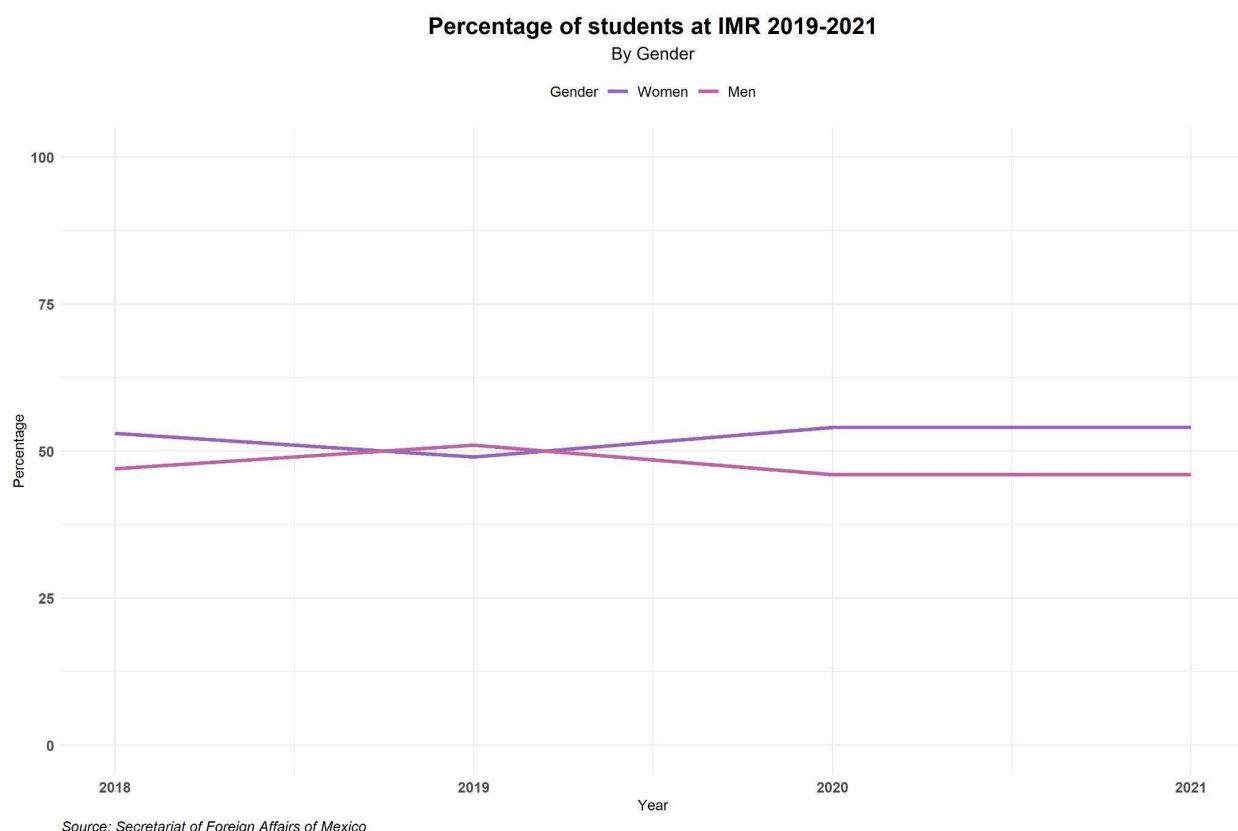


Figure 5: Percentage of students by gender, created by IF using data from freedom of information requests numbers 330026822000065 and 330026822000170

It is not possible to know the overall percentage of women in SRE itself since the Secretariat says it does not have rank and gender-disaggregated data on its personnel. Moreover, the percentage of women by rank in the Foreign Service has remained static since 2018 with no notable change since the implementation of the FFP in 2020. Only 32% of the diplomatic appointments proposed by President Lopez Obrador are women. Finally, although there are no figures on the percentage of female professors in the IMR, since 2018 there has been gender

<sup>37</sup> Estevez, Dolia. 2020. Tweet 6 SEM Diplomats, Including 4 Ambassadors, Reject For “Unnecessary” Reform To The SEM Law That Seeks To Legislate Equality Gender , available at: <https://twitter.com/DoliaEstevez/status/1339947431316873217> (August 31st, 2022).

parity among IMR students. Nonetheless, parity among SEM students does not translate within the SEM's executive-level ranks.

Finally, in recent years, prior to the adoption of the FFP, SRE implemented some positive actions that contribute to achieving its gender parity objectives. For example, maternity and paternity leave and care systems, as well as reformed its promotion protocols and requirements. SRE also set a goal to eliminate disparities in pay and said it would "award 20 medals to outstanding female diplomats for breaking the glass ceiling between 2020 and 2024".<sup>38</sup> However, according to Ramírez Camacho and Mejía Gutiérrez, SRE personnel were not aware of this initiative and by 2021 no medals had yet been awarded.<sup>39</sup>

## SRE Free of Violence

The third pillar of the FFP is a SRE free of violence and safe for all. With this pillar, SRE aims to eradicate violence within the institution. In order to achieve this goal, the pillar includes commitments to implement a zero tolerance policy regarding harassment and GBV; to provide adequate attention to Mexican victims of GBV in consular services; and to develop safe and violence-free urban perimeters around SRE buildings.<sup>40</sup>

Prior to the launch of the FFP, a series of regulations and protocols were adopted to prevent and address GBV. For example, SRE implemented a protocol for the prevention, attention and sanction of sexual harassment. In services provided abroad, SRE has designed and implemented services and protocols such as the consular service windows for women and the protocol for consular attention to unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents, which also predates the FFP.<sup>41</sup>

To better understand the situation regarding GBV within the Foreign Ministry before and after the FFP, IF asked SRE for the number of complaints of sexual harassment and GBV filed within the whole SRE, consulates and embassies between 2018 and 2021.<sup>42</sup> The General Directorate of Foreign Service and Human Resources responded to our request and stated that there were two complaints in 2018, two complaints in 2019, three complaints in 2020 and one complaint in 2021. These complaints were filed with the Ethics Committee of SRE in a Mexican Representation abroad in accordance with Article 62 of the Agreement issuing the General Guidelines for the Integration and Operation of the Ethics Committees. Additionally, SRE stated that in 2020 the Directorate of Foreign Service and Human Resources received a complaint for alleged sexual harassment conduct in a consulate.

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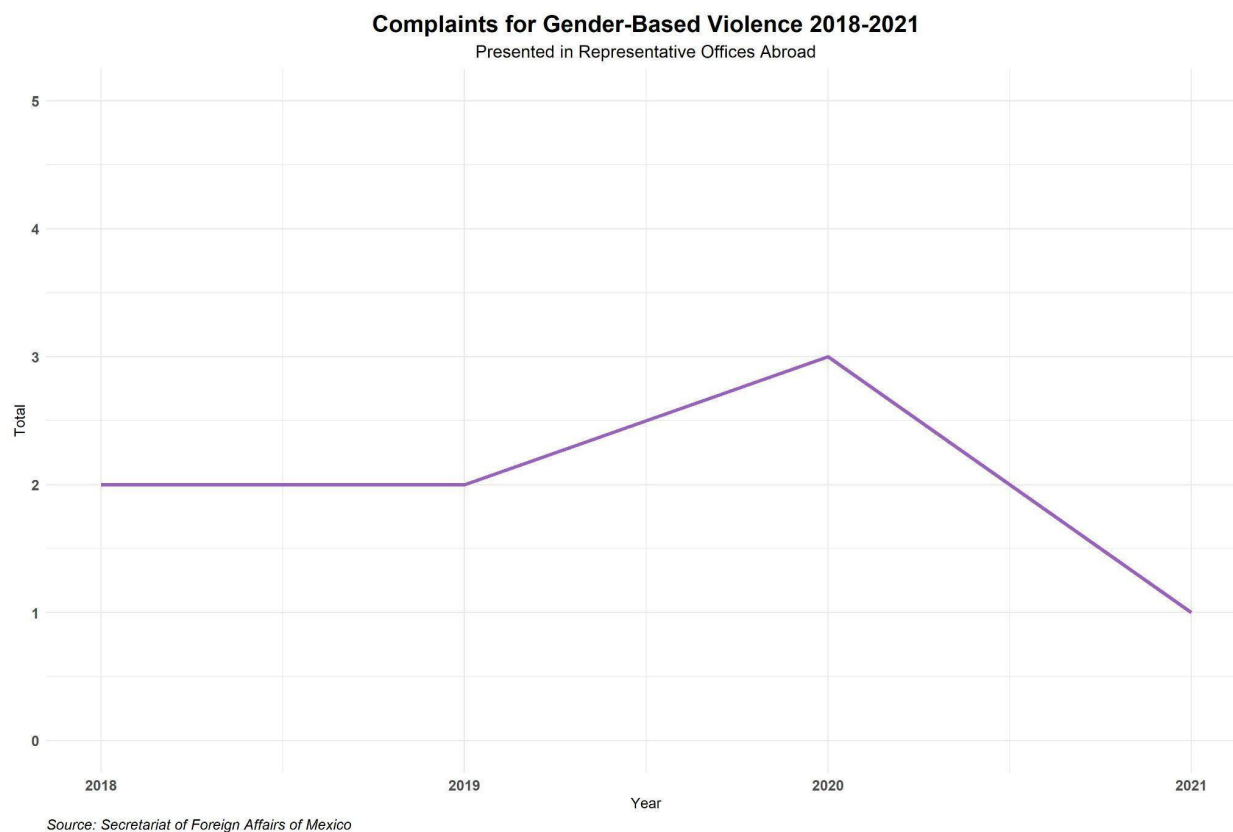
<sup>38</sup> "The Feminist Foreign Policy of the Government of Mexico", SRE, available at: [https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/576095/Presentacion\\_n\\_PEF\\_baja.pdf](https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/576095/Presentacion_n_PEF_baja.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> Ramírez Camacho, V. and Mejía Gutiérrez, X., 2021.

<sup>40</sup> Ramírez Camacho, V. and Mejía Gutiérrez, X., 2021.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Freedom of information requests numbers 330026822000170 and 330026822000065



*Figure 6: Number of Complaints to SRE for GBV (2018-2021), created by IF using data from freedom of information requests numbers 330026822000065 and 330026822000170*

In order to delve deeper into the issue of GBV in the Foreign Ministry, IF chose two recent media cases that raise relevant questions relating to FFP implementation. These following case studies are not intended as exhaustive accounts, rather as points of reference to gather lessons for the better implementation of the third FFP pillar.

### **Case 1: A Harasser Cannot Be an Ambassador**

In the spring of 2019, students of the *Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México* (better known in Mexico for its acronym ITAM) made public accusations of sexual harassment against the historian Pedro Salmerón. In April of that year, the historian resigned from the institution without having completed the investigative procedure as outlined in ITAM's Protocol for the Prevention and Attention of Cases of GBV. In January 2022, Salmerón was appointed as Mexico's ambassador to Panama by President López Obrador. The reaction from students, activists and feminist collectives was immediate. They demanded the withdrawal of the appointment. The contradiction was evident: how was it possible that a country with a FFP could have an ambassador that had been accused of sexual harassment?



The president defended his choice by arguing that there were no criminal charges against Salmerón and disqualified the survivors and the feminist movement. However, the pressure continued and escalated into a diplomatic dispute. The Panamanian Foreign Ministry asked Mexico not to request the approval. In response, the Mexican president publicly expressed his indignation: "It turns out that we proposed him as ambassador to Panama and, as if it were the Holy Inquisition, the Panamanian minister or chancellor disagreed and asked us not to send the request for approval". Finally, after two weeks of pressure from the feminist movement, Salmerón declined the nomination.

This case is relevant for the Mexican FFP for the following reasons:

- The current government, in its 2018-2024 National Project, pledged that it would not resort to political appointments and would favor appointments from the SEM. The appointment of Salmerón was, to say the least, provocative from this standpoint. But even more striking was the signal that President López Obrador, the current constitutional leader of Mexico's foreign policy, is not committed to the FFP.
- The Mexican president broke the protocol by announcing the appointment before informing the host country. This is a sign of authoritarianism and centralization of foreign policy decisions that are incompatible with the spirit of the FFP. Just as IF emphasizes the need for accountability in foreign policy, IF also calls attention to the urgency of the exercise of checks and balances by the other actors involved in foreign policy under Mexican law, such as the legislative branch.
- Although Salmerón's case was high-profile due to the historian's public persona and the support of the president, it is far from being the only case. According to interviews conducted for this report, information requested from SRE on the number of cases of sexual harassment and harassment in the Secretariat, there are other diplomats in office, including SEM members, facing similar accusations and who currently represent Mexico abroad.
- Persons accused of harassment or GBV should not be eligible to hold diplomatic positions until the appropriate authorities review the case and due process has been exhausted, this includes, if pertinent, reparations and justice for the victims. The SRE and the Presidency must respect the SEM codes and guarantee that whoever represents Mexico abroad complies with the principles of "preparation, competence, capacity and commitment to improvement". In addition, IF also recommends nominating people committed to gender justice, human rights and non-discrimination.



information IF had access to, it is not clear that these steps have been followed in the Schietekat case.

Mexican women are survivors of GBV outside of Mexico in all countries where they live, and it is essential that authorities outside of Mexico respond efficiently and humanely to these cases. What would have happened if Schietekat had not escalated her situation with the press and civil society?

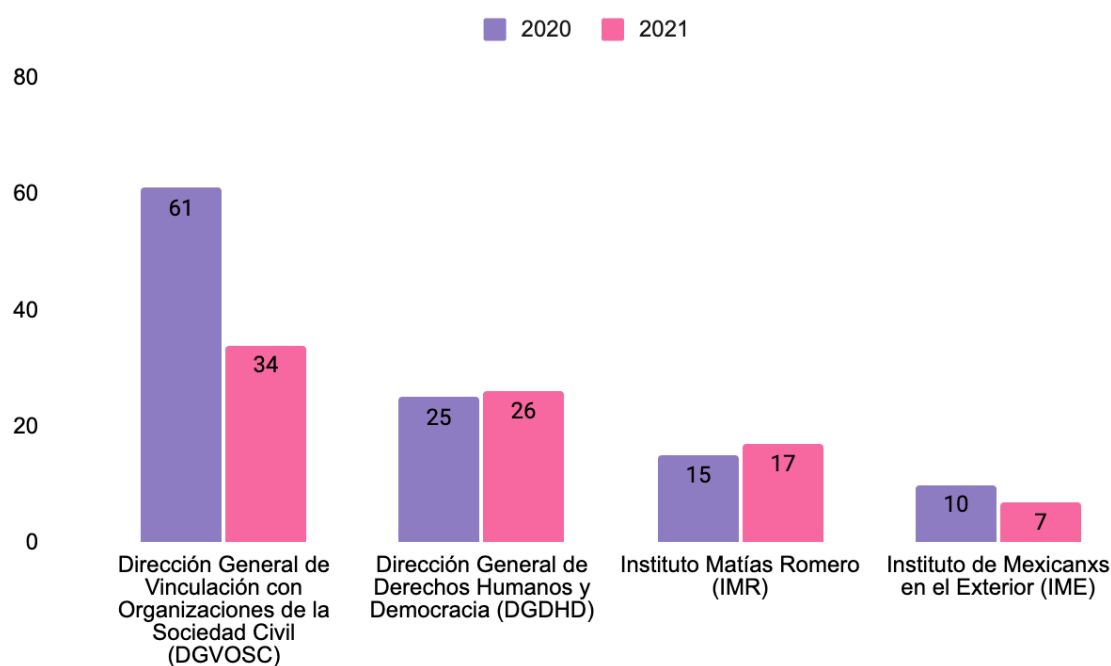
Regarding this case, IF notes and recommends the following:

- FFP officials should seek to ensure that the FFP is applied in consular services. Consular staff should be sensitized to gender perspectives, especially when it comes to protection.
- It is essential to strengthen existing efforts and mechanisms to ensure that SRE personnel and representatives abroad apply the Protocol for Consular Attention to Victims of GBV and its Toolkit. It is also necessary to provide representations abroad with the financial and human resources to assist and direct the victim to specialized services. It is also necessary that both the Directorate General of Consular Affairs and the consular areas abroad incorporate guidelines for the prevention of GBV in strategic planning and capacity building.
- Consular authorities must provide support to GBV survivors abroad to ensure justice, comprehensive reparation of damages and guarantees of non-repetition. In the case of Paola Schietekat, IF was informed that this follow-up had significant flaws.
- It is essential that diplomatic personnel have a thorough understanding of the context in which they operate: language, culture, and the legal system. SEM is a center of excellence that would have to consider the generalized and intersectional vulnerabilities of the entire target population.
- Just as patriarchal institutions are found all over the world, there are professionals and civil society organizations dedicated to advising and protecting women's rights in every country. It is important that embassies and consulates locate these organizations and establish contact with them to ensure support when cases arise.
- Each diplomatic representation should have a directory of human rights advocates who can accompany victims when they seek support. They should also be aware of existing supports and services, including shelters.

## Equality is Visible

The fourth pillar of the SRE's FFP is "equality is visible" described as the "visibility of the SRE's female staff."<sup>46</sup> SRE describes this pillar as actions to raise awareness of female staff at SEM, SRE, and Mexico's missions abroad. To assess SRE's efforts to achieve this objective, IF asked SRE, via freedom of information requests, the number of FFP-related events from 2020 to 2021 and the event's name, dates, and format (virtual or face-to-face) to assess the pillar progress. The figure below shows the information provided by the SRE's Transparency Unit.

**Number of SRE Events by Department aligned with Mexico's FFP(2020-2021)**



*Figure 7: Number of Events by Department aligned with Mexico's FFP (2020-2021), created by IF using data from freedom of information request number 330026822000065*

Notably, only two SRE departments, the IMR and the General Directorate for Human Rights and Democracy, reported an increase in FFP-related events. IF's hypothesis is that these results are due to each area having a different understanding of what constitutes an FFP-related event. While the Deputy Secretariat for Foreign Affairs (SSRE) defines FFP-related events as "actions and efforts to mainstream gender in the international fora,"<sup>47</sup> the General Directorate for South America (DGAS) categorizes FFP events as "the appointment of 8 women as Mexico's Head of Diplomatic Missions in Latin America and the Caribbean."<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the Secretariat shows

<sup>46</sup> "The Feminist Foreign Policy of the Government of Mexico", SRE, available at: [https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/576095/Presentacion\\_PEF\\_baja.pdf](https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/576095/Presentacion_PEF_baja.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> Freedom of Information request number 330026822000065

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

there is a lack of coordination and collaboration among its different departments. For example, the IMR said it organized 15 events in 2020 and 17 in 2021. Only 11 were targeted to SRE, SEM, and staff abroad. In sum, the lack of coordination and outward focus of events to implement FFP is far from what the SRE defined as the ultimate goal of the FFP, "success is the collaboration, cooperation and permanent feedback between the different areas."<sup>49</sup> Likewise, the information provided reflects the prioritization of events targeted at foreign audiences. FFP events do not intend to impact domestically.

## Female Visibility in Social Media

Mexican foreign policy has a longstanding tradition of promoting and proclaiming international days to raise awareness and draw attention to peace, development, gender, and human rights. Building on this, the current administration intensified the dissemination of gender commemorations, primarily through SRE's official social media channels and personal accounts of Secretariat officials. For instance, the 2021's International Women's Day campaign called "dignifying image" stood out because it highlighted the profile of 16 women working in the Deputy Secretariat for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights.<sup>50</sup> It summarized their professional careers and their contributions to gender equality. Unfortunately, the campaign did not extend to other SRE departments.



Figure 8: Cristopher Ballinas's twitter, Director General for Human Rights and Democracy<sup>51</sup>. March 2021.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> "The Feminist Foreign Policy of the Government of Mexico", SRE, available at: [https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/576095/Presentacion\\_PEF\\_baja.pdf](https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/576095/Presentacion_PEF_baja.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> Ballinas, Christopher. 2021, Tweet posted to commemorate International Women's Day 8M 2021, available at: <https://twitter.com/crisballinas/status/1369033365026836480> (August 31st, 2022).



Although the "equality is visible" pillar prioritizes communications and visibility of women in Mexican foreign policy, SRE granted the FFP leadership to Christopher Ballinas, Director General for Human Rights and Democracy.<sup>52</sup> Even though the FFP claims to support more women in leadership roles within SRE, a man was appointed to head the FFP implementation. Ballinas has participated as FFP Mexico lead in events that discussed the underrepresentation of historically marginalized groups. For instance, in the Feminist Foreign Policy Summit held on April 13, 2022, Ballinas attended on behalf of Mexico in the panel "Decolonizing (Feminist) Foreign Policy". The event's objective was to discuss the elimination of power imbalances between the Global South and Global North, as well as gender and racial hierarchies in World Politics that silence underprivileged populations. Still, a man took the floor to explain women's contributions to international affairs.

The document titled "The Feminist Foreign Policy of the Government of Mexico" states that it will place the "the FFP brand in all SRE actions and spaces."<sup>53</sup> IF identified two related campaigns. The first is a video disseminated on social media during World Breastfeeding Week. This campaign links the FFP with the installment of the breastfeeding room and the daycare in the central building of SRE. However, both were built during the last administration.<sup>54</sup> The second campaign was launched to commemorate the International Day Against Homophobia. In the picture below, officials point out the inclusive bathrooms, which again were installed before the FFP adoption.<sup>55</sup> In both campaigns, the hashtag #PolíticaExteriorFeminista was used.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> "The Feminist Foreign Policy of the Government of Mexico", SRE, available at: [https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/576095/Presentacion\\_PEF\\_baja.pdf](https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/576095/Presentacion_PEF_baja.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> "Newsletter 76: SRE promotes breastfeeding actions" 2014, available at: [https://embamex.sre.gob.mx/eua/images/pdf/boletines/028\\_Boletn76.pdf](https://embamex.sre.gob.mx/eua/images/pdf/boletines/028_Boletn76.pdf)

<sup>55</sup> "SRE is awarded the Mexican Standard on Labor Equality and Non-Discrimination 2015" 2016, available at: <https://www.gob.mx/sre/articulos/la-sre-se-certifica-en-la-norma-mexicana-en-igualdad-laboral-y-no-discriminacion-2015>



Figure 9: Marta Delgado's twitter, Deputy Secretary for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights<sup>56</sup>. August 2021.



Figure 10: Cristopher Ballinas's twitter, Director General for Human Rights and Democracy<sup>57</sup>. May 2021.

<sup>56</sup> Delgado, Martha. 2021. Tweet posted on the occasion of the World Breastfeeding Week, available at: <https://twitter.com/marthadelgado/status/1422366769210134533> (August 31st, 2022)

<sup>57</sup> Ballinas, Cristopher. 2021. Tweet posted during the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia, available at: <https://twitter.com/crisballinas/status/1394319236034617344> (August 31st, 2022).

Finally, Mexico's FFP understands the "equality is visible" pillar as actions related to "gender parity in panels, events, meetings, integration of delegations, among others."<sup>58</sup> Global North stakeholders and the media particularly celebrated the COP 25 and COP 26 Mexican delegations since these were almost all conformed by women.

IF recognizes this effort to call for greater participation of women in international negotiations. Yet, gender parity in Mexico's delegations to bilateral meetings and multilateral fora is pending. As in the photo below (Figure 11), women are absent. The Directorate for the Environment and Climate Change was composed of women even before the adoption of the FFP. Once again, it is not possible to affirm that the gender-balanced Mexican delegations to COPs derived from the FFP implementation. Instead, it owes to the longstanding tradition of Mexico on women's rights promotion at multilateral fora.



Figure 11: SRE. Meeting between Secretary Marcelo Ebrard and Alejandro Mayorkas, USA Secretary of Homeland Security. May 2022.<sup>59</sup>

## An Intersectional Feminist Foreign Affairs Secretariat

This FFP pillar is the most innovative. Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality framework, first coined in 1989, has been popularized in contemporary feminist debates. It is a theoretical tool for understanding multiple oppressions created by intertwining power relations in diverse historical and geopolitical contexts. It breaks with liberal feminism, which historically prioritized

<sup>58</sup> "The Feminist Foreign Policy of the Government of Mexico", SRE, available at: [https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/576095/Presentacion\\_PEF\\_baja.pdf](https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/576095/Presentacion_PEF_baja.pdf)

<sup>59</sup> SRE, 2022, Photos of SRE Meeting with Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, available at: [https://twitter.com/SRE\\_mx/status/1521507425907585025](https://twitter.com/SRE_mx/status/1521507425907585025) (August 31st, 2022).

patriarchy over other exclusionary systems and structures like racism, ableism, LGBTQ+phobia, etc. Instead, intersectionality exposes overlapping power asymmetries.

Despite the relevance of this pillar, the FFP is unclear in defining what "an Intersectional Feminist Foreign Affairs Secretariat" means. According to the FFP, this pillar is "complements and interconnects with other global and national actions."<sup>60</sup> Similarly, intersectionality seeks to promote "international human rights instruments" and "gender perspective". The FFP says that the key intersectional actions are the following:

1. *Cooperation and assistance with human rights-based approach and gender perspective.*
2. *Economic promotion that empowers and makes visible women*
3. *Cultural promotion that acknowledges the contribution of women*
4. *Tourist promotion with a gender perspective.*<sup>61</sup>

SRE also mentions that intersectionality is related to strengthening commitment to international standards and improving coordination in Mexico's Federal Public Administration to comply with human rights.<sup>62</sup> However, these are actions that SRE is obliged to carry despite the FFP. As mentioned in the "Beyond *Feminism* Adjective" section, Mexico's legal framework requires all secretariats to adopt human rights standards and mainstream gender perspective across all areas and tasks. Therefore, SRE's use of the term intersectionality should be more precise. Intersectionality as a human rights framework does not provide anything new, nor does it ensure measurable actions.

SRE confuses intersectionality with gender mainstreaming.<sup>63</sup> This demonstrates a unidimensional vision of patriarchy. Intersectionality is meant to focus on the diversity and complexity of women's experiences and avoids simplistic analyses void of historical and geopolitical contexts. It seeks to promote equality by considering various social systems like gender, sex, class, ethnicity, among others. Intersectionality acknowledges that women pursue multiple and diverse agendas, struggles, interests and objectives. Their contexts and identities differ and nuance must be considered in Mexico's FFP. Instead of promoting an essentialist view of women and feminism, SRE should advocate for acceptance of the differences among women's movements based on their political agency.

On the other hand, the Mexican FFP only mentions women and girls as if they were a fixed group or category. Furthermore, the Mexican FFP does not mention how it will address Afro-descendent populations, indigenous, first nations or tribal people, people with disabilities, and migrants, among others. Although there has been foreign policy work on LGBTQ+ rights,

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<sup>60</sup> "The Feminist Foreign Policy of the Government of Mexico", SRE, available at: [https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/576095/Presentacio\\_n\\_PEF\\_baja.pdf](https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/576095/Presentacio_n_PEF_baja.pdf)

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> "The Feminist Foreign Policy of the Government of Mexico", SRE, available at: [https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/576095/Presentacio\\_n\\_PEF\\_baja.pdf](https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/576095/Presentacio_n_PEF_baja.pdf)

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

these are rarely framed within the FFP. These demonstrate the lack of coordination between the different departments of SRE again, showing poor FFP cohesion. For example, this administration inaugurated the process for Mexican consulates to issue gender-non-conforming IDs for Mexicans abroad.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, it was not conveyed within the FFP narrative.

As previously mentioned, the Mexican FFP was developed without the participation of civil society and feminist movements. Intersectionality should encourage coalition building, listening, and being open to critical dialogues. The Global Alliance for Care<sup>65</sup> is a multi-stakeholder partnership that includes local civil society and is co-facilitated by Mexico. It is an example of intersectional foreign policy because it seeks to reform the global economic system to reduce the disproportionate and unpaid care work carried out by women from multiple actors and points of view. Yet, the Global Alliance for Care was initiated by INMUJERES and not by SRE. SRE should build broader coalitions with non-state actors, particularly feminist collectives, to adopt an intersectional approach.

Furthermore, the "intersectional feminist FFP" pillar does not challenge power. An intersectional foreign policy should promote an emancipatory project beyond traditional International Relations' harmful arrangements. It should work to reform roles, norms, institutions of global affairs to achieve a more significant presence, leadership, and participation of all women in all international spaces.

Finally, regarding the intersectional pillar's financial sustainability, the funding has remained the same from 2018 to 2020. The SRE's gender equality funding comes from the federal public budget annex number 13, titled "Expenditures for equality between women and men". According to the Federal Expenditure Projects from 2018 to 2020, SRE actions on gender equality received the same budget.<sup>66</sup> The General Directorate for Mexicans Abroad Protection's allocation remained constant, with 12 million pesos. The General Directorate for Foreign Service and Human Resources received 4 million pesos, and the General Directorate for Human Rights and Democracy was granted one million pesos.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

After conducting thorough research, IF found little public information regarding Mexico's FFP. Other than a few blog posts and a patchwork of presentations and texts, there is no policy roadmap detailing the FFP's actions, outcomes, indicators, and intended impact. This made it

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<sup>64</sup> "Foreign Secretary Ebrard delivers the first birth certificates with new gender identities issued by Mexico's consulates", 2022, available at: <https://www.gob.mx/sre/en/articulos/foreign-secretary-ebrard-delivers-the-first-birth-certificates-with-new-gender-identities-issued-by-mexico-s-consulates-292780?idiom=en>

<sup>65</sup> "Global Alliance for Care: an urgent call to action", 2022, available: <https://alianzadecuidados.forogeneracionigualdad.mx/?lang=en>

<sup>66</sup> "Federal Expenditure Projects from 2018", 2018, available: [https://www.transparenciapresupuestaria.gob.mx/work/models/PTP/Home/PEF2018/PEF\\_2018.pdf](https://www.transparenciapresupuestaria.gob.mx/work/models/PTP/Home/PEF2018/PEF_2018.pdf)



particularly difficult to conduct an independent evaluation. Due to the lack of publicly available information, IF sent freedom of information requests to SRE, conducted interviews, analyzed descriptive data, monitored social media, and consulted existing literature on Feminist International Relations Theory and FFPs. As a result of these efforts, IF draws the following conclusions.

### **Pillar 1: Gender Mainstreaming Across Mexico's FFP**

- The Mexican FFP has a broad and ambitious scope. Although SRE says it seeks to mainstream gender perspectives across all foreign policy areas as one of its core objectives, IF found this does not happen in practice.
- SRE plays a leadership role in the FFP's rollout. However, no evidence points to the mainstreaming of gender perspectives across all units and areas. The bulk of the FFP-related work falls under the Subsecretariat of Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights.
- The FFP is most visible in Mexico's rhetoric in multilateral fora. However, it is largely absent from other foreign policy issues, such as defense, trade, and diplomacy.
- Given the state of the world today, Mexico's position as a feminist country that openly supports women's rights and participation is important. This is particularly relevant as more countries elect leaders with authoritarian tendencies who support anti-rights agendas.
- However, Mexico's FFP lacks legitimacy given the inconsistency with domestic policies. Legitimacy is further eroded because the Mexican President of Mexico constantly undermines national feminist movements.

### **Pillar 2: Gender Parity Within the Foreign Affairs Secretariat**

- SRE replied to IF's freedom of information request saying it had no records of personnel demographic data, disaggregated by gender or ranks. Thus, it is not possible to assess whether or not there is gender parity inside SRE.
- Three years after the FFP was adopted, the percentage of women in the highest ranks of the Foreign Service remained largely unchanged. Since 2019, only 7% of women in the Mexican Foreign Service hold the title of Ambassador. Moreover, only 6% and 10% hold the title of Minister or Counsel, respectively.
- Only 25 out of the 79 diplomats (less than a third) appointed by President López Obrador have been women.
- The percentage of female students in the IMR is approximately 50%. Hence, there is gender parity. However, it is worth noting that this gender parity does not continue into Mexico's Foreign Service, where a gender gap still remains.

### **Pillar 3: A Foreign Affairs Secretariat Free of Violence and Safe for Everyone**

- SRE has announced several norms and protocols to prevent and address GBV within its ranks. However, there is very little information available regarding how these are implemented and if they have achieved their intended outcomes.



- Diplomatic appointments should be aligned with the FFP's principles and should ensure that appointees do not have pending allegations of sexual harassment or assault against them.
- Violence against Mexican women also happens beyond Mexico's borders. Diplomatic personnel should be trained to address and aid Mexican GBV victims. This is particularly true in countries where social and judicial conditions do not favor women's rights.
- Failure to address gender-based violence abroad and adequately follow established protocols lead to re-victimization and further expose victims to violence.

#### **Pillar 4: Equality is Visible**

- Since the FFP was adopted, SRE has reported an increase in the number of gender-related events it has sponsored. However, different units within SRE use different criteria to define gender-related events. Hence, there appears to be a disconnect and lack of coordination within SRE regarding what does and does not constitute gender-related events in the context of its FFP.
- IF observed an increase in the use of the #PoliticaExteriorFeminista hashtag in SRE's social media campaigns.
- The number of gender-related training imparted by SRE has not increased since the adoption of the FFP. Nor has there been an increase in concrete actions to address, prevent and sanction GBV within SRE during the same period.

#### **Pillar 5: An Intersectional Feminist Foreign Affairs Secretariat**

- SRE reported that intersectionality-related efforts would be financed under the "Resources for equality between women and men" pillar of the federal budget. However, data shows that the budget remained constant from 2018 to 2020 and that additional resources were not granted to support these efforts.
- The FFP only mentions women and girls, rendering alternative systems of oppression invisible and excluding other identities, such as race, disability, ethnicity, and gender identity, sexual orientation, among others.
- SRE understands "intersectionality" and "gender perspective" as synonymous, which goes against the disruptive spirit of intersectional discourse and ignores multidimensional identities beyond binary gender categories.

In conclusion, IF urges SRE to adopt a clear policy roadmap that promotes transparency and accountability, as well as mechanisms that include meaningful participation by feminists. IF also urges SRE to dedicate resources and report publicly on FFP implementation progress. Lastly, there is a risk of instrumentalizing feminism and pinkwashing the governments' rhetoric in lieu of laying the groundwork for transformative and leading feminist radical change. The instrumentalization of the feminist discourse creates an illusion of change while keeping systems of oppression intact and further setting back gender justice. Genuine efforts to advance gender justice should reimagine traditional international relations and diplomacy. Furthermore, they should seek to dismantle power asymmetries and systems of oppression.

## Recommendations

1. SRE should develop a FFP policy roadmap that details actions, indicators, outcomes, and intended impact in a transparent and accessible format that allows academics and civil society to monitor and evaluate results.
2. The Federal Government should design a budgetary framework and assign adequate resources for the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the FFP.
3. SRE should collect personnel demographic data, disaggregated by gender, rank, ethnicity, etc. This data should be publicly available via SRE's online portal, in an open format.
4. SRE should fulfill its commitment to mainstream gender perspectives across all of its foreign policy areas, including international security, migration, diplomacy, defense, cooperation, and trade.
5. SRE should guarantee that the FFP is an institutional policy. It should be clearly articulated and coordinated across the Secretariat. Gender perspectives should be mainstreamed across SRE's units in a cohesive way. All SRE units should cooperate and coordinate to ensure there is a consistent gender lens to their work. Moreover, gender perspectives should continue to be applied within SRE's administrative areas, including Human Resources, resource management, and budget allocation.
6. SRE should designate gender specialists and permanent personnel who are responsible for promoting and implementing the FFP, as well as ensuring consistency across all units and policy areas.
7. SRE should standardize and guarantee the adequate implementation of its Protocol for Consular Attention to Persons who are victims and survivors of GBV and its corresponding Toolbox across all of its embassies and consulates.<sup>67</sup>
8. Additionally, SRE should train its diplomatic and consular staff regarding the aforementioned Protocol and Toolbox. Embassies and consulates should also be knowledgeable about the normative frameworks regarding GBV in the contexts and countries they operate in to adequately support Mexican survivors of GBV abroad.
9. SRE should form an independent permanent feminist board to review and approve the FFP's policy roadmap.
10. SRE should report its FFP-related activities and outcomes annually.

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<sup>67</sup> Protocol for Consular Attention to Unaccompanied Migrant Children and Adolescents, Consular Attention Protocol for Mexican Victims of Human Trafficking Abroad, Foreign Search and Investigation Support Mechanism (MAE), People Search Table Disappeared Migrants, among others.

## Annex

[Link to Google Drive folder with freedom of information requests and official responses.](#)