



Pitches introduction meeting WO=MEN and minister Sjoerdsma of Foreign Trade & Development Cooperation

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Support for strategic cooperation with the gender equality movement

Nadia van der Linde, deputy director and programme manager international processes [WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform](#)

Let me start by thanking you for this conversation with these wonderful representatives of WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform. About WO=MEN I can be brief as you are familiar with us. We are the largest member platform in the Netherlands in which over 50 civil society organisations collaborate to achieve full gender equality and women's rights worldwide. We've been doing this since 2006, meaning we will celebrate our 20th anniversary this year.

From many of our members we've received positive feedback about their own introduction meeting with you – the gathering in April, bilateral introductions and the [recent UNGA consultation meeting](#). **It demonstrates your commitment to restoring the strategic cooperation Dutch civil society and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs used to have in defending and advancing human rights, including gender equality and women's rights, democracy and rule of law.**

My central question today is:

- **How can we further strengthen and secure this strategic cooperation and our joint work on achieving gender equality and women's rights?**

We were happy to hear during the debate on the Foreign Affairs policy letter last week about your commitment to engage with civil society and other actors on the future of the SDGs. And we look forward to the follow-up conversation post the UN General Assembly.

But we are very aware all this comes from both your personal drive and the current new government that is more supportive of the critical role civil society has.

A key lesson we learned from the previous government is how vulnerable this position of civil society is. How vulnerable our work on human rights, on women's rights, SRHR and LHBTQI+ rights is.

All of this has thankfully been restored.

But we all know there are still forces, also in our parliament, that try to weaken our efforts to achieve gender equality, and that undermine the watchdog role we have. By presenting false frames about strategic litigation. By proposing funding cuts when organisations are critical about government policy. We listened to such rhetoric during the commission debate about the joint Foreign Affairs priority letter.

We are glad you spoke out against this. That is one important way to counter the playbook of the anti-rights movement. Outspoken political support in international spaces as well as at home, is crucial.

Together with our members we call for sustained, long-term investments in the work on women's rights and gender equality. We are keen to follow the presentation of the annual budget tomorrow. We hope to see at least a full reparation of article 3.2. for women's rights and gender equality, along with plans for further strengthening and growth in the future.

There are lessons to learn from allies within the worldwide gender equality movement, who've been resisting the anti-rights movement for years. We encourage strategic partnerships with them, to jointly build the necessary resilience and effective strategies to move forward on women's rights and gender equality.

Climate justice and gender equality

Jay Hamilton, programme coordinator at [Mama Cash](#), of the [Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action \(GAGGA\)](#)

Women and girls are at the frontlines of the climate crisis. Worldwide climate change contributes to increasing social, economic and political inequalities. Women are disproportionately affected because they are already systematically excluded, with less resources and access to decision making.

Women and girls are [14 times more likely to die during extreme climate disasters than men](#). Every year millions of girls are forced to stop their education because of climate change. Cases of gender-based violence are on the rise as global temperatures rise; [femicide is even found to increase by 28% during heatwaves](#).

Women on the frontlines defending human rights and the environment often pay a very high price, such as Berta Caceres who was killed in 2016 because of her opposition to the Agua Zarca dam project, which received financing from the Dutch development bank FMO.

Climate change is one of the areas where the leadership and impact of women taking action is strongly felt. Women are leading the way with practical local solutions and tangible results, and with a potential for scaling up. But they are doing this with no or very limited resources.

There is growing recognition that climate change, gender equality and sustainable development are inextricably linked and support for a fairer approach to the climate crisis. International funding, however, is lagging. Women and girls on the frontlines of the climate crisis have access to less than 3% of the promised climate funding.

As members of WO=MEN, we therefore call on the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (BHOS) to continue to champion gender equality and women's rights as a cross-cutting and a standalone priority:

- Continue sustained, long-term investments in women human rights defenders and feminist movements. Those leading on the frontlines!
- Speak up in intergovernmental spaces and call on other governments to step up their engagement in supporting climate and gender justice.
- Seek alliance with other progressive governments in support for gender equality, e.g. in climate justice, SRHR and the role of civil society.
- And last but not least, lead by example by implementing international agreements on climate, development cooperation and funding.

Gender-responsive policies for a sustainable economy

Maike van Adrichem, policies and programmes at [ActionAid Netherlands](#)

I would like to talk about international responsible business conduct and how the Netherlands can promote gender-responsive policies in this field.

I can start with an example from our partner in South Africa: a country with 80 per cent of global (land-based) manganese reserves, a mineral that is crucial for the energy transition. Our partners, women-led groups, documented the harm caused by the large-scale mining: lack of clean drinking water, diseases due to dust caused by the mining operations, no channel for complaining, etc. And women are particularly affected, as they are traditionally responsible for fetching water and caring for the sick.

On top of that, incidents of gender-based violence and sexual harassment increase with the influx of mainly male mining workers in the area. Our research found that investments in these mining operations (Glencore) [can be linked to Dutch financiers like ABN AMRO, ING and Rabobank](#).

This brings me to your important statement in Parliament last week: incorporating the OECD guidelines in trade policies and agreements helps create a level playing field. This is exactly where foreign trade and international cooperation are mutually reinforcing and can bring about real impact. Impact in human rights, women's rights and the environment.

But, to get there, we need strong policies and laws that fully integrate a gender lens. The application of CSDDD is quite limited and many companies and financial institutions are not covered under responsible business conduct legislation. There is a big opportunity now with the application of CSDDD in the Netherlands to tackle these gaps, including for high-risk industries like mineral mining.

Finally, I want to stress the importance of enabling community and women-led organizations to hold companies and governments to account. While women are often hit hardest, they are also organizing, acting and provide a much-needed critical voice. But these initiatives are hardly able to benefit from mechanisms [like the Global Gateway](#) or very restrictive and short-term funds.

I have two recommendations and a question:

- Make gender equality a mandatory element in all trade policies and trade agreements and use your position to voice this as a priority in Dutch policy also when it comes to trade.
- Support women-led local organizations better access to key mechanisms like the Global Gateway, new funding opportunities tailored to their needs, and visibility: for example, ensure that during all trade missions you make a point of meeting with women-led organizations.

I would be curious to hear more about your ambitions in this area, and whether you plan to set concrete targets for incorporating gender equality systematically across trade policies?



Women, Peace & Security and meaningful civic space

Husna Jalal, founder & director of [Women for Change International](#)

I would like to say a few words about Women, Peace and Security, and especially about the women who are working for peace while, at the same time, the space for civil society is becoming smaller and smaller.

Twenty-six years after UN Security Council Resolution 1325, we all know that women need to be part of peace and security processes. But in reality, women are still too often left out of the rooms where decisions are made. And those who are trying to change this, women peacebuilders, human rights defenders and civil society organisations are increasingly facing pressure, intimidation and restrictions.

So, for me, the question is not only how we protect women from conflict. It is also how we make sure that women have the space and power to shape what comes after conflict, and to shape the decisions that affect their lives.

We can see this very clearly in Afghanistan. Afghan women have been pushed out of formal political life, but they have not stopped organising. They continue to document what is happening, advocate for their rights and work for a different future, both inside Afghanistan and through the diaspora.

I think it is important that we do not see their exclusion as their absence. They are still political actors. And we need to find ways to make sure their voices are heard in our policies and in international discussions about Afghanistan.

We see something similar in Sudan. Sudanese women are organising their communities, providing humanitarian support, documenting violations and working for peace, often in incredibly difficult circumstances. Yet when it comes to formal peace processes and political negotiations, their voices are still not heard enough.

And this brings me to a broader point that I think is very important: there can be no meaningful Women, Peace and Security agenda without meaningful civic space.

If women cannot organise safely, speak openly, document abuses or engage with decision-makers, then simply saying that we support women's participation is not enough.

So, Your Excellency, I would encourage you to focus on four things:

First, make women's participation a real priority in the Netherlands' response to current conflicts, including Sudan and Afghanistan. And use Dutch influence in the UN and the EU to make sure women-led organisations are part of peace and political processes, not just invited to the side events.

Second, protect the women who are already doing this work. Women human rights defenders and peacebuilders need political support, diplomatic protection and funding that is flexible and long-term enough for them to actually do their work.

Third, engage more strongly with the diverse Afghan and other diaspora communities. Diaspora women have knowledge, experience and networks that are incredibly valuable. They should not only be consulted when it is convenient; they should have a meaningful place in discussions about policy and peace.

And fourth, invest directly in local women-led organisations. Too often, funding is short-term and difficult to access. But these are the organisations that stay when international attention moves on. They are often the first to respond and the last to leave.

About WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform

WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform is one the largest gender equality networks in Europe with over 50 organisations and 125 professionals, uniting development and peace organisations, women's rights and gender equality organisations, diaspora organisations, trade unions, journalists, knowledge institutes, academics, gender experts in the national police force, military personnel, entrepreneurs, students and opinion-makers. Together we work to achieve full gender equality and women's rights worldwide. See for more information: www.wo-men.nl

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