



Scene-Setter: Feminist Foreign Policy Dialogue

Canada has a longstanding commitment to human rights, including gender equality – a principle that is enshrined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and is faithful to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. In recent years, the Government of Canada adopted several transformative programs, policies, and initiatives designed to uphold and advance human rights and achieve gender equality both at home and abroad. Its Feminist Foreign Policy aims to be the international expression of these ongoing, coordinated, and whole-of-government efforts.

Feminism at the core of Canada's international agenda

In pursuing a Feminist Foreign Policy, Canada will seek to advance its overarching international objectives of strengthening a rules-based international order, supporting lasting peace and security, fostering prosperity, and achieving the *Sustainable Development Goals* by 2030. Canadians know that promoting rights-based, open, and inclusive societies where all people, regardless of their background or identities, can fully benefit from equal participation in economic, political, social and cultural life is an effective way to build a safer and more prosperous world.

A feminist approach asserts that human rights, gender equality, and inclusion are central objectives of Canadian foreign policy. Canada's current approach places a focus on dismantling persistent inequalities between women, men, girls, boys, and gender diverse people, and accounts for how other forms of discrimination may also overlap or intersect.

The Feminist Foreign Policy recognizes that such efforts will include transforming social norms, power relations and discriminatory social, political, legal, and economic systems and institutions and structures that perpetuate, intentionally or unintentionally, inequality and exclusion of diverse groups. It reflects a conviction that all people should enjoy the same human rights and the same opportunities to succeed and fulfil their potential and seeks to remove the obstacles to their full emancipation. Men and boys have an equal role to play as stakeholders and partners in eliminating harmful social norms, promoting gender equality and defining positive masculine identities.

As the current international rules based order is under strain due to a variety of factors, a feminist approach also recognizes the need to support and modernize many of the institutions that operate within it so that global bodies and rules respond to 21st century realities and can operate effectively and sustainably, and people and countries, no matter how small, can feel confident their interests are addressed and that no one will be left behind.

A Feminist Foreign Policy: Consolidating and building on our efforts

Canada currently applies a feminist approach across all of its international policies and programming, including diplomacy, trade, security, development, and consular services. This builds on a series of sectoral feminist policies and initiatives developed in recent years, notably: Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy; its Trade Diversification Strategy, with its inclusive approach to trade; its Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations, and the appointment of a dedicated Women Peace and Security Ambassador; and its Defence Policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged."

Canada's **Feminist International Assistance Policy** advances gender equality, empowerment and human rights at the center of decisions on humanitarian action, development assistance, and peace and security interventions. Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy has committed to significantly increasing programming that will advance gender equality and empower women and girls. At least 95% of all Global Affairs Canada's bilateral international development investments will specifically target or integrate gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls by 2021. Canada's feminist agenda recognizes the role of civil society in advancing, promoting and protecting human rights. This is why Canada promotes, advocates for and funds local women's rights organizations to advance their work. Canada made historic investments in support of local women rights organizations through its Women, Voice and Leadership program and the Equality Fund.

As part of Canada's **Trade Diversification Strategy**, Canada is pursuing an inclusive approach to trade that aims to ensure that the benefits of trade are more widely shared. Canada seeks to remove barriers to trade while mainstreaming gender-responsive provisions across our free trade agreements (FTAs), including stand-alone Trade and Gender chapters in FTAs with willing parties.

Canada's **2nd National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security** provides an integrated, whole-of-government approach to our engagement in fragile, conflict-affected, and post-conflict settings. It recognizes that the full and equal participation of women in peace and security efforts is essential for conflict prevention, peacemaking, and humanitarian assistance to post-conflict recovery and state-building. In 2017, Canada launched the **Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations**, a five-year pilot project that aims to catalyze transformational change to increase the meaningful participation of women in United Nations (UN) peace operations. And in 2019, Canada appointed its first dedicated Ambassador for Women, Peace, and Security, who plays a central role in strengthening Canada's efforts to achieve more inclusive and peaceful societies around the world.

Canada's **Defence Policy**, "**Strong, Secure, Engaged**," with its focus on gender equality and diversity, is also part of this feminist approach. It commits to substantially improve recruitment, retention, and training of personnel, including by capitalizing on the unique talents and skill-sets of Canada's diverse population. The Canadian Armed Forces will increase the proportion of women in the military by 1 percent annually, to move from the current 15 percent to 25 percent representation by 2026.

Civil society organizations, academics, and experts from various fields contributed significantly to the elaboration of these policies through in-depth consultations and engagements with the Government of Canada. These engagements helped Canada to develop its feminist thinking, gather data, and build evidence that demonstrates that a feminist approach is the most effective way to attain lasting peace and security, foster inclusive prosperity, and achieve the *Sustainable Development Goals by 2030*.

Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy will seek to continue to build on these achievements to provide a comprehensive, cross-cutting, and coordinated whole-of-government approach to promoting human rights, advancing gender equality, empowering women and girls, fostering diversity and inclusion, and upholding human dignity around the world.

Context for action

Our world is going through a period of deep transformations and uncertainties. The existential threat of our time - the climate crisis – is compounded by an immense demographic transformation and a spike in conflicts. By 2050, the world's population could increase by 2.2 billion, almost half of which in Africa alone. An estimated 2 billion people live in countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence and more than 65 million individuals have been forcibly displaced worldwide because of persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations. We have witnessed the plight of the Rohingya in Myanmar, the

rise of intolerance and violence against religious minorities, and attacks on front line human rights defenders, journalists and humanitarian workers.

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated economic crisis has amplified and accelerated a number of pre-existing global trends, including a rise in populism and protectionism; social, economic and technological inequalities; challenges to human rights and other democratic values; and a profound questioning of multilateral institutions and of the current rule-based international order.

As the pandemic deepens gender inequalities, with women and girls in all their diversity suffering disproportionate health, economic and social impacts, even the limited gender equality gains made in the past decades are at risk of being rolled back. Still today, more than 150 countries have laws that discriminate against women, and 15 million girls are married before the age of 18. Worldwide, 225 million women don't have access to the contraception methods of their choice, and every year, more than 22 million women and adolescent girls undergo a dangerous abortion. Every nine minutes, one of them dies as a result. Around the world, including in Canada, one in three women will suffer some form of physical, sexual or gender-based violence in her lifetime. In many countries around the world, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit and intersex (LGBTQ2I) persons also continue to face widespread discrimination and violence, leading to exclusion and harming the lives of LGBTQ2I persons as well the communities and economies in which they live. The current COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the inequalities faced by women, girls, and LGBTQ2I people, particularly with regard to rising food and shelter insecurity, disruptions in accessing healthcare, increased exposure to violence, and serious impacts on mental health.

Despite the many challenges uniquely faced by women, in all their diversity, they are taking their place at the negotiating table, whether to resolve conflicts, conclude trade agreements or rule cities and countries. Inspiring women leaders are seeking to improve the lives of the most vulnerable, to advocate for human rights and democratic principles, to protect the environment, and to seek global solutions for enduring peace and prosperity. The current health crisis presents opportunities for sustainable and transformative change. Through its suite of feminist policies outlined above, Canada has shown strong engagement and leadership, and is uniquely positioned to contribute to the global response to new challenges and realities while putting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls - including those facing multiple barriers due to their race, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, ethnicity, age, religion, or disability - at the centre of its efforts.

Proposed areas to explore in discussions

In order to help inform the Government's approach to its Feminist Foreign Policy going forward, there are a few over-arching considerations where it would benefit from insights from targeted partners, and on some specific evolving and emerging sectoral areas. These include the following:

Over-arching considerations: How should we design, implement, monitor and evaluate a Feminist Foreign Policy?

As we consider the intent, approach, and assessment of Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy, Canada is committed to continuous improvement.

Some items for discussion

- What should be the high-level/overarching principles and guidelines that the Feminist Foreign Policy should adopt to implement its vision?
- What lessons can Canada draw from other countries for its Feminist Foreign Policy? What do these countries do especially well? Where can their policies be improved?
- How effective are Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) tools as a means of integrating gender equality, intersectionality, and human rights considerations in our international engagement?
- How can we better mobilize partners and build alliances in multilateral and regional forums to work towards achieving transformative change for gender equality and inclusion?
- What lessons can we draw from existing policies (e.g. FIAP, CNAP) to improve the application of Canada's overall feminist approach internationally?
- What emerging policy areas with implications for gender equality should we be concentrating on?
- What is a feminist approach to monitoring, evaluation and accountability for the Feminist Foreign Policy implementation?
- What are the key indicators that a Feminist Foreign Policy should track?
- How is Canada doing with regard to measurements and indicators of progress on existing policies?
- Building on what we are already doing, what can Global Affairs Canada do internally to improve and to better implement, advocate and advance its feminist approach?

Select evolving and emerging areas: Enhanced Diplomatic Engagement, Women, Peace and Security (WPS), Responding to evolving vulnerabilities, Inclusive digital transformation

1. Enhanced diplomatic engagement

Under its Feminist Foreign policy, Canada has sought to pursue diplomatic efforts in multilateral forums, through its bilateral relations and in issue-based advocacy that reinforce efforts to uphold and advance human rights, gender equality and inclusion, while helping to reform the current international rules-based order and shape the system as it evolves to Canada's advantage.

Some Items for Discussion

- What is a feminist approach to the current rules-based international order (RBIO)?
- How can Canada leverage its diplomatic engagement to modernize the RBIO while employing a feminist approach?
- What is the connection between gender equality and the rules-based international order? How can we effectively advance both in the current global context?
- What measures can Canada implement to more effectively increase the representation of diverse groups of women and other underrepresented groups in global bodies, boards, and value chains?
- What new diplomatic alliances and partnerships should Canada build to help advance a more inclusive multilateralism?

- What are some of the emerging human rights and gender equality challenges with respect to the RBIO?
- How can Canada help increase the representation of underrepresented groups, for instance in international institutions?
- What would a feminist approach to international law entail, including enabling conventions, treaties, agreements, declarations, resolutions, and protocols to be inclusive and reducing the likelihood of being gender blind?

2. Women, Peace and Security (WPS)

Under its Feminist Foreign Policy, Canada can continue to leverage its existing strengths and global leadership position on the Women, Peace and Security agenda to push for a more ambitious application of WPS principles across peace and security issues.

Some Items for Discussion

- Is Canada's current approach proving effective? How could it be improved?
- How can a WPS approach help to guide action or resolve problems related to:
 - Police and military deployments
 - Arms control
 - Counter-terrorism
 - Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction

3. Responding to evolving vulnerabilities

Under its Feminist Foreign Policy, Canada has sought to support the poorest and most vulnerable, including those impacted from fragility and violence, and to enhance resilience by individuals and societies to climate change and environmental degradation, including those living in least developed countries and small island developing states. This has included action in international forums and multilateral bodies, as well as through bilateral efforts.

Some items for discussion

- How can a feminist approach guide action or resolve problems related to:
 - Global compacts for migration and refugees
 - Human trafficking and sexual exploitation and abuse
 - Accountability of humanitarian workers?
 - Climate action
- Where should Canada be focusing its efforts with regard to a feminist approach to migration and refugee issues?
- How can Canada strengthen accountability for the targeting of humanitarian workers?
- Building on its Gender Responsive Humanitarian Action, how can Canada strengthen its response to humanitarian crises and adopt a more comprehensive and coordinated approach, including through the peace and security, development and humanitarian assistance nexus?
- Is Canada's emphasis on working with women's rights advocates, human rights defenders, journalists, and civil society actors bearing fruit? Should it be expanded?
- What are the emerging issues on climate change? Where should Canada focus its efforts?

4. Inclusive digital transformation

In response to the evolving digital transformation occurring in societies and economies, under its Feminist Foreign Policy Canada has been seeking to shift from the traditional narrow focus on digital divides towards a broader concept of digital inclusion, which addresses not only the growing digital gender divides but also the intangible elements of connectivity, civic participation, privacy, and safety. This comprehensive approach to risks related to inequalities encourages a more inclusive, accountable, fair and transparent global digital community.

Some items for discussion

- How can Canada best work internationally to bridge the digital gender divide and mitigate exacerbating inequalities?
- What is needed to take existing initiatives further? (e.g. Charlevoix Commitment to End Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, Abuse, and Harassment in Digital Contexts)
- What new diplomatic efforts in international forums might be advantageous for advancing a feminist approach to these questions? What partnerships with the private sector, civil society or other stakeholders?

Annex: Human Rights, Gender Equality, Inclusion

Diplomatic Highlights Since 2017

- ✓ Canada took the lead in developing the EMPOWER initiative in the 2020 G20, a key step toward mitigating the underrepresentation of women at senior levels of business and entrepreneurship.
- ✓ In June 2019, Canada successfully hosted the Women Deliver 2019 Conference in Vancouver, the world's largest conference on gender equality and the health, rights, and wellbeing of women and girls. Canada announced a major investment of \$1.4 billion annually by 2023 supporting women's, children's, and adolescents' health and nutrition around the world.
- ✓ Also in June 2019, the Government appointed Jacqueline O'Neil as Canada's first Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security to advance a whole-of-government approach to the WPS agenda.
- ✓ In September 2018, Canada co-chaired with the EU the first formal Women Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Montreal. The meeting underscored the benefits that come from integrating a gender perspective in foreign affairs priorities and sent a powerful signal for women's leadership worldwide.
- ✓ In August 2018, Canada hosted Leaving No One Behind: The Equal Rights Coalition Global Conference on LGBTQI Human Rights and Inclusive Development in Vancouver.
- ✓ During its 2018 G7 Presidency, Canada adopted a comprehensive and systematic approach to integrating gender equality in all areas of G7 work. This included:
 - Establishing the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council, which advised our G7 Presidency on integrating a gender equality lens across its work and produced a series of recommendations.
 - Endorsing the Charlevoix Commitment to End Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, Abuse, and Harassment in Digital Contexts, the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education for Girls, Adolescent Girls, and Women in Developing Countries
- ✓ In June 2018, Canada led the adoption of a ground-breaking Human Rights Council Resolution on Preventing and Responding to Violence Against Women and Girls in Digital Contexts, with 73 countries co-sponsoring.