



Global Affairs Canada: Feminist Foreign Policy Dialogue

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

Self Identification:

Name(s): [Doug Kerr]

Pronoun: [He/him]

Organisation: [Dignity Network Canada]

Email: [doug@kerr.org]

Please indicate if you are submitting this contribution:

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

Please indicate the areas covered in your contribution:

- ☒ Overarching considerations
- ☒ Enhanced diplomatic engagement
- ☐ Women, Peace and Security (WPS)
- ☒ Responding to evolving vulnerabilities
- ☐ Inclusive digital transformation
- ☐ Other: please specify [SOGIESC (sexual orientation, gender identity & expression and sex characteristics) issues]

Written Contribution:

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

Dignity Network Canada is a broad coalition of 44 Canadian civil society organizations with an interest in the international movement for human rights and dignity for all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). We have been encouraging SOGIESC-related inclusion in Canadian foreign policy, including through international assistance and refugee policy, since 2015.

We applaud the Canadian government's focus on integrating a feminist approach to foreign policy. We believe that a feminist approach must integrate a comprehensive and intersectional analysis of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics. SOGIESC based discrimination and violence is often intrinsically linked to misogyny, patriarchy and sexism. Issues relating to SOGIESC are an integral part of a feminist approach and must be reflected deeply in Canadian foreign policy. We also believe that a feminist foreign policy must go beyond diplomacy and integrate across all areas of Canada's international engagement - including international assistance, refugee policy, trade and other areas - and SOGIESC-related issues are an opportunity for Canadian leadership in all these areas.

The foundation of a Feminist Foreign Policy is a vision of rights-based, open, and inclusive societies where all people, regardless of SOGIESC, can fully benefit from equal participation in society and where this is seen as an effective way to build a safer and more equitable world. Canada has sought to support the most marginalized, including those impacted by instability and conflict, which in many parts of the world includes LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex) people. LGBTI communities continue to face discrimination, violence and criminalization, and Canada has an important role to play in protecting and advancing human rights for LGBTI people and communities. Over 70 jurisdictions still criminalise same-sex relations, and in recent years numerous countries have actively rolled-back hard-won rights or increased persecution of LGBTI communities. In some regions, the backlash against human rights for LGBTI people has arrived hand-in-hand with anti-feminist and patriarchal fundamentalist faith movements. Thus, in many parts of the world, feminist movements are closely intertwined with LGBTI movements and movements for sexual and reproductive health and rights.

In recent years, Canada has made important strides around the inclusion of SOGIESC considerations in its foreign policy; However, this is only a first step. If intersectionality and inclusion are to be achieved, there is much more to be done. LGBTI human rights issues cannot be a check-box or an afterthought, they must be an integral part of a feminist foreign policy. In February 2019, there was an important and historic announcement of \$30M over 5 years for a new set of international development assistance programs targeting LGBTI communities, including the new Act Together for Inclusion Fund which is launching this year. Yet this is still only approximately 0.1% of Canada's total annual international assistance, so there is still much further to go to ensure integration of SOGIESC issues and LGBTI human rights within overall international aid programmes.

In January 2020, Dignity Network Canada submitted a set of recommendations on how Canada could, over the next three years, begin to move towards improved integration of SOGIESC-related human rights in foreign policy, including international aid and refugee policy. The full set

of these detailed policy and program implementation recommendations can be found [here](#), though several are also addressed in this submission.

This submission lays out five key considerations and possible steps to achieve integration of SOGIESC issues in Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy. These considerations are grounded in our past recommendations, which we encourage Global Affairs Canada to review.

1. **A feminist foreign policy is inclusive of SOGIESC.** As one of a small number of progressive countries that has made SOGIESC-related issues part of its foreign policy, Canada has the opportunity and potential to show even further leadership on the world stage by integration of SOGIESC issues into the FFP. This includes such activities as:
 - a) developing standards across Canadian missions abroad and Global Affairs Canada departments to demonstrate support for SOGIESC issues;
 - b) increasing support for LGBTI human rights defenders through implementation of the Voices at Risk Guidelines and financially supporting the work of LGBTI human rights defenders,
 - c) in the new refugee stream for human rights defenders including special provisions for LGBTI defenders and especially those who are not able to cross a border and register with UNHCR;
 - d) and playing a leadership role in certain countries or regions around convening the international community's engagement with LGBTI civil society.
2. **Multilateral Leadership on SOGIESC.** Canada has a unique opportunity to lead in the world on SOGIESC issues and human rights. In multilateral fora, Canada can further increase coordination with other countries developing Feminist Foreign Policies to ensure they are SOGIESC inclusive. Canada must also continue to play a strong role in LGBTI-inclusive multilateral fora, such as the Equal Rights Coalition. Canada has shown leadership in the past as Co-Chair of the ERC from 2017-2019. The ERC, however, currently lacks the infrastructure and capacity to move forward, and Canada should work with other like-minded countries, such as Sweden, France and Denmark, and all countries committed to feminist foreign policies, to ensure that this relatively young coalition has the capacity to coordinate and share strategies to advance SOGIESC equality.
3. **SOGIESC Framework within FFP.** To date, Canada's approach to SOGIESC issues and human rights has been somewhat *ad hoc* without a clear plan or framework. To ensure that SOGIESC issues are an integral and ongoing part of the FFP, there should be a visible plan on how Canada intends to integrate SOGIESC issues into the FFP, including coordination across all parts of Global Affairs Canada, from geographic mission support to international trade. This framework should also reach beyond GAC to other ministries that have an international component such as Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and Canadian Heritage. The government of Canada is in the process of developing a federal LGBTIQ2 Action Plan across all areas of federal responsibility and this must be aligned with Canada's plan for SOGIESC internationally.
4. **SOGIESC Capacity within Global Affairs Canada.** For SOGIESC issues to be meaningful component of the FFP, there must be designated leadership for these issues within Global Affairs Canada. Often work on SOGIESC issues happens 'off the side of the desk' of staff or it is not clear within the department how SOGIESC issues are to be integrated into programmes. Identifying senior leadership, with sole responsibility for

driving SOGIESC-related issues across the FFP is critical. In addition, identifying some staff in GAC with policy responsibility for SOGIESC issues within the FFP will assist with implementation and integration.

5. **Collaboration with civil society.** Lastly, a key principle that should underline the FFP is collaboration with civil society. Canada has a vibrant, growing, organized and connected LGBTIQ2 civil society. Dignity Network Canada, itself, brings together 44 organizations based in Canada with an interest in global SOGIESC-related issues. Many DNC member organizations are increasingly involved in global partnerships in many countries around the world, are involved in international fora for LGBTI human rights and engaging the Canadian public in these issues. Through the ACTIF and other funds, there will be an increased level of engagement and leadership of Canadian civil society, who are eager to be partners in developing GAC's SOGIESC strategy. A Feminist Foreign Policy should view Canadian civil society as a key strength and an important part of advancing the goals of the policy. This will require collaboration, both here in Canada but also at the country-level around the world where Canadian CSOs are active.

We look forward to continuing to work with colleagues across Global Affairs Canada and the Government of Canada as we strive to advance inclusion of SOGIESC issues and human rights into policy and programming. Thank you for this opportunity to make a submission into this important process.

Dignity Network Canada