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# Global Affairs Canada: Feminist Foreign Policy Dialogue

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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

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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
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## Written Contribution:

### Feminist Foreign Policy Dialogue - Submission from the Global Centre for Pluralism

The Global Centre for Pluralism is pleased to provide input to inform the white paper on Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy.

*The [Global Centre for Pluralism](#) is an independent, charitable organization founded by His Highness the Aga Khan and the Government of Canada. We work with policy leaders, educators and community builders around the world to amplify and implement the transformative power of pluralism. Our mission is to influence perspectives, inform policies and inspire pathways to advance pluralism.*

For a feminist foreign policy to succeed around the world, it must be developed within a broader ecosystem that looks at inequity and marginalisation holistically. This includes ethno-cultural, religious, socio-economic and indigenous diversity, and the many ways that gender intersects with these identities to compound and deepen exclusion. Women and girls are disproportionately disadvantaged relative to men, but if a woman is also from a marginalized group, her circumstances will be more challenging and require tailored solutions.

Bringing about inclusive societies based on the respect of all forms of diversity necessitates the restructuring of all unequal power dynamics in a society. Further, seeding wider societal support for diversity and equity initiatives is an important step in gaining public backing to address gender equality proactively. A pluralist framing of the foreign policy is therefore essential and Canada has the opportunity to play a leadership role in pushing for this approach. ***Feminism needs pluralism.***

Canada can take a pluralist approach to its Feminist Foreign Policy in the following ways:

#### **1) Leading on inclusive, representative multilateralism in support of the rules-based international order**

Multilateralism has faced a crisis in recent years, made more stark by the pandemic. Without concerted, coordinated efforts to address inequality, we will not make the necessary progress. As such, renewing multilateralism needs to be core to Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy. However, beyond a renewal of multilateralism, we need to build a more inclusive multilateral space. This requires positioning diverse voices, including those of women, at the centre of the multilateral system, rather than at the periphery.

Canada can be at the forefront of efforts to convene other states committed to a people-centred multilateral approach, and together, raise and engage underrepresented voices in substantive ways. This requires first understanding and

addressing the challenges and barriers that many key civil society actors working for gender equality – for pluralism – face in getting their voices heard on the world stage. This could include launching campaigns to raise the public profile of these actors, supporting multi-lingual translation, and pushing for more accessible approaches to multilateral meetings and consultations to enable more groups to participate fully and substantively. This would also include shaping of agendas and outcomes of the discussions. This requires more time, efforts, and resources. It involves transforming the status quo at the multilateral level by engaging in a fundamentally different way, founded on listening and learning.

## **2) Transforming power dynamics in peacemaking**

Women's inclusion in peace processes is necessary but insufficient for the full transformation of peacemaking needed to build more sustainable peace. Canada must continue to stand with the many women peacemakers and civil society organizations already pushing for new approaches to peacemaking and take these discussions further.

Peace processes themselves need to be transformed by changing who has power at the state level to support these processes and who is at the table, not just observing, but making decisions. Canada can help to lead this change, which places respect for diversity at the heart of peace processes and agreements, and of the decision-making processes underpinning them. Eventually, this will lead to systems that have enshrined gender equality and respect for diversity as the foundations for sustainable peace.

To do this, Canada can leverage its position internationally to push within the state-based multilateral system to shift power structures that govern peace processes and agreements to ensure diverse voices are represented and heard.

## **3) Tracking data on gender equality in more nuanced, holistic ways**

To understand where real progress is being made and to inform action, a Feminist Foreign Policy must track gender equality indicators, while being grounded in a holistic measure of the state of pluralism in each context. This holistic measurement considers gender inequality within a wider ecosystem that looks at the compounding effects of all aspects of identity, as well as the legal and social frameworks that erode or advance progress on equality.

Canada can lead with this more nuanced measure of gender equality, that includes data disaggregated for race, socio-economic status, religion, language, indigeneity and so on. More robust data will help inform how to be most effective with policy interventions. Canada can work with other partner countries around the world to support the collection of disaggregated data, and more importantly, focus the use and analysis of this data to support actions that advance commitments to gender equality specifically, and respect for diversity more widely.

#### **4) Advancing norms for gender equality through educating for pluralism**

Advancing gender equality begins with seeding these norms in the education of young people. A core commitment of Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy must be investments in pluralism-focused educational initiatives. These include teacher training and learning tools, focused on engaging constructively with differences, critical thinking, learning about power dynamics in society, and fostering greater respect for others. Such programs will support young people around the world to develop a greater understanding of and respect for gender equality as part of a more pluralist outlook in their context.

Canada can support and invest in these efforts, which ultimately help to challenge entrenched biases and prejudices and build a more pluralist citizenry that respects and values diversity.

In conclusion, gender equality becomes a reality when the full breadth of women's experiences are supported and recognised as part of building an inclusive society. Pluralism is such a fundamental underpinning to this endeavour, that the connections between pluralism and gender equality should be more explicitly considered in Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy. Concrete actions to advance pluralism through Canada's engagements and policies abroad should go hand-in-hand with its Feminist Foreign Policy.

We look forward to working with the Government of Canada to advance these important goals.