



BIARRITZ PARTNERSHIP FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Gender Equality Advisory
Council's Call to Action



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> Call to Action

Girls and women are powerful agents of change, but cannot realize their full potential due to the discrimination and violence they face worldwide. The Council¹ expresses great concern about the persistent, and even growing, threats and backlash against girls' and women's rights in many countries, and condemns the considerable responsibility of some political leaders in this step backwards.

At the same time, the action of brave girls and women has broken the silence, and highlighted the urgent need for strong and determined action. G7 countries have a particular responsibility, and the capacity to use the power of influence, to advance girls' and women's rights in the interest of humankind. This is not a women's issue; it is everybody's issue. **The Council urges G7 Leaders to be as brave as girls and women are every day.**

Legislation is a powerful instrument for change, as long as it is comprehensive, implemented, funded, and monitored with sanctions and incentives. Building on the work of the 2018 Gender Equality Advisory Council, the 2019 Council has worked on a legislative package. It calls on all countries, especially G7 members, to improve their legislative frameworks, and assure the conditions for their implementation in order to make gender inequality history.

In addition, the Council urges States to ratify all relevant gender equality standards, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Istanbul Convention, the ILO *Violence and Harassment Convention*, adopted in June 2019, and to withdraw all potential reservations to these instruments.

The Council also invites G7 leaders to ensure that gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment be a stand-alone theme in all G7 deliberations, and be integrated into all areas of discussion and deliberation. It calls on them to use their fiscal and political power, and to strengthen their international cooperation, to further gender equality, and place it at the heart of the global and domestic agenda, including through donor approaches to humanitarian aid and international development.

The Council calls on G7 States to establish a feminist foreign policy and make gender equality a priority of their foreign policy and official development assistance, as well as national contributions to multilateral organizations. The Council also calls on the G7 to increase financial resources dedicated to gender equality, as well as to women's groups and civil society organizations in their domestic budgets, and in their development assistance, and to live up to their promises of committing to spending 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) on Official Development Assistance.

As the G7 has identified Africa as a strategic partner, the GEAC calls on the Leaders of the G7 countries to strongly support girls and women in Africa. It calls on the G7 to prioritize the inclusion and economic empowerment of women in development assistance by increasing support for girls' and women's health, learning, and inclusion in the financial system. This will take more than words – it will take a commitment to work with all governments and citizens, to design laws, remove barriers and deliver programmes designed with girls' and women's access in mind.

The Council urges the Leaders to financially support women's rights organizations, and conduct meaningful consultation with girls and women, including feminist and grassroots organizations. No legislative framework should be developed, implemented and evaluated without meaningful consultation.

The Council calls on all countries, especially G7 members, to:

- 1 **Identify and abolish discriminatory laws, and / or amend clauses that are discriminatory, including in the G7 countries where they still exist.**
- 2 **Enact and implement progressive legislative frameworks that advance gender equality. The Council invites G7 Leaders and non-G7-countries to commit**

1. The Council is an independent body. Government representatives recognize the inherent challenge of both advocating and receiving recommendations in their dual roles as members of the Council and the G7, and do not take this report to be a government document of endorsed recommendations.

to adopt and implement at least one, but preferably several laws in their own countries, to strengthen existing laws, and to begin this legislative process before the next G7 Presidency.

3 Guarantee necessary financing to implement those legislative frameworks. Invest in strong accountability and governance mechanisms, including support for civil society.

4 Measure and report on progress through time-bound agreed indicators.

The Council also calls on the G7 to define an accountability framework with clear indicators that continuously track and annually report on G7 performance on gender equality actions and commitments, as well as achieving

gender parity in G7 country, ministerial, and representative delegations by 2025.

The Council recommends that Leaders adopt accountability frameworks for all G7 commitments on gender, at home and abroad, in order to measure, adjust, and assess public policies, and their effects on girls and women. All measures taken during the G7 should be integrated into these accountability frameworks. Furthermore, G7 countries should report progress on and hold themselves accountable to their commitments to girls' and women's rights and gender equality as articulated in UN and other multilateral forums. Regarding the commitments on law in the framework of the Biarritz Partnership, the Council recommends creating synergies with the monitoring of SDG Indicator 5.1.1, which monitors progress in this area through an independent expert review process.

> EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Equitable and quality education and health are fundamental human rights, central to gender equality and women's economic empowerment, and to overall well-being and prosperity. The Council calls on the Leaders to guarantee, through their legislative frameworks, policies and programmes:

- 12 years of free, quality, and compulsory schooling for all children in safe, supportive, and secure learning environments;
- Universal Health Coverage with a stronger gender lens;
- Gender-responsive and inclusive education and health systems, including collaboration between these sectors;
- The end of child marriage, discrimination, and school-related gender-based violence;

- Opportunities for the development of skills and competencies for the future of work, without gender stereotypes and bias
- Relevant curriculum development for the future of work
- Provision of comprehensive sexuality and healthy relationship education in schools and out-of-school settings.
- Increased numbers of trained teachers and health providers of all genders, at all levels.
- Exercise of sexual and reproductive health and rights, including access to modern contraception and safe abortion information and services.

> ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Ensuring women's equal participation in the economy is essential for empowerment, and increases inclusive economic and green growth. The Council calls on Leaders to ensure, through their legislative frameworks, that:

- Women have equal access to all financial services.
- Women have the right to own assets.
- Women's participation in economic decision-making is enhanced, through special measures such as quotas.
- Unpaid care work is recognized, reduced and redistributed evenly between men and women
- Paid parental leave is established for all workers, as well as access to quality, affordable childcare, including for single parents.

- More ambitious equal pay laws are adopted, providing incentives and sanctions.
- A work environment free from harassment, discriminations, and sexism is guaranteed.
- Girls' and women's entrepreneurship is fostered through expanded access to funding, markets, and training.

The Council calls on the G7 members to accelerate girls' and women's access to STEM education, training, research, and employment, especially in digital technology and artificial intelligence.

> ENDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

States have a responsibility to end gender-based violence. Strong and comprehensive legal frameworks are a fundamental basis for this effort. The Council calls on the Leaders to ensure that their legislative frameworks:

- Encompass prevention of violence by eliminating the root causes of gender-based violence, from gender inequality to harmful gender stereotypes and social norms, including ideas of masculinity that are harmful to all genders.
- Make clear that violence against girls and women is never a private matter: it is a public matter that requires State responses and accountability. It can never be justified by honour, passion, the preservation of family unity, culture or religion. Impunity on these or any other grounds must end.
- Enshrine the principle of consent, recognizing that sex without consent is rape.
- Provide comprehensive support services to survivors. This includes sexual and reproductive health, housing, leave from work, financial aid and access to justice.
- Ensure that training is provided to service providers and first responders, especially law enforcement and health professionals. Cases should be processed as a priority, without delay, and through dedicated institutions centred on the needs and rights of the survivor.
- Ensure the effective prosecution and conviction of perpetrators of violence, through the implementation

of accessible and appropriate justice and security institutions, allowing for effective investigations and prosecutions, and protecting survivors from stigmatization and fear of retaliation.

The Council also urges the G7 and other global leaders to address two crucial issues:

- **Rape reparation.** Accountability is paramount to preventing rape, and justice is the healing process. It is also a vital deterrent against regimes that use rape as a punishment in prisons, and as weapons of war in conflict areas. We urge the G7 Member States to fund the establishment of prevention centres where holistic care is provided to survivors, which should also be a priority of their foreign, development and humanitarian assistance policies. We urge the G7 States to establish a Global Fund for Survivors.
- **Online violence.** We are entering a new world where our lives and privacy are being used and mainstreamed by platforms without any regulation. This is a cyber era, and it requires urgent regulation. We call for legislation to address, prevent, and ban all cyber harassment, revenge porn, and cyber bullying. We call upon the G7 Member States to adopt a set of laws and norms to be implemented urgently by governments, and effectively enforced by all social media networks and platforms.

> COMBATTING DISCRIMINATION, ENSURING FULL GENDER EQUALITY IN POLICIES, AND THE FULL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC LIFE

The Council notes persistent and sometimes growing discrimination and inequalities, including within the G7 countries themselves, and urges the Leaders to address their root causes and to guarantee the full integration of gender equality in all public policies and programmes.

This implies:

- The establishment of laws and measures specific to combatting gender stereotyping and the transformation of cultural norms and burdens, which should be accompanied with courageous policies and ambitious means enshrined in the laws.
- The removal of discriminatory laws.
- Putting in place legal frameworks that promote, enforce and monitor gender equality, including policies / plans, enforcement and monitoring mechanisms and allocation of financial resources.

The Council recommends that, at a minimum, legislative frameworks should be established to ensure non-discrimination on the basis of gender:

- Prohibit direct and indirect discrimination against girls and women (customary and personal laws that violate

constitutional provisions on equality or non-discrimination should be rendered invalid);

- Ensure equal rights to legal capacity, including to choose where to live, to choose a profession, to obtain an identity card and to apply for passports;
- Ensure equal rights in civil and family matters, including the right to enter into marriage and initiate divorce, to be the legal guardian of their children during and after marriage (except where the child's or partner's safety or well-being would be put at risk) and to confer citizenship to their spouses and their children;
- Set 18 as the minimum age of marriage, with no legal exceptions,
- Ensure equal rights and access to hold public and political office, including through transitional quotas for women in politics;
- Establish a specialized independent body tasked with receiving complaints of discrimination based on gender;
- Require the production of gender statistics;
- Promote strong accountability and governance mechanisms, including gender-responsive budgeting and support for civil society.